

6 ISLANDS ZINS



ISSUE 3

EXPLORING DECOLONIAL PRACTICES
IN CARIBBEAN COMMUNITIES

2022

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Issue 3: Exploring Decolonial Practices in Caribbean
Communities*

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6 ISLANDS zine

Issue 3: Exploring Decolonial Practices in Caribbean Communities



6 ISLANDS ZINE

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Editor's Note

In addition to impacting our lives in many negative and positive ways, the pandemic offered us, like many others, an opportunity to reflect. We noticed that many members of our community felt a need to come together, to share, and to heal from everything that was going on in the world, while paradoxically, we could not physically come together because of pandemic measures. As a result, most of our meetings were online. In these meetings, we reflected on the fact that we often talked about decolonization in the abstract. We also saw that many universities and big institutions were co-opting the term decolonization to the point where it was becoming empty of meaning. So, with this third edition of 6 ISLANDS zine, we really wanted to ground the term decolonization in the Caribbean, and in the experiences of Caribbean people.

This zine explores: how do (Caribbean) people actually decolonize. How do we do decolonization, in a practical way?

Over the past 18 months, we explored these questions through a book club event, two online documentary screenings on colorism in Curaçao and food practices and decolonization in Haiti, a community writing workshop, as well as many other collaborations with amazing community organizers from the ABCSSS islands. The 24 contributions that comprise this zine are all concrete examples of Caribbean ways to practice decolonization and constitute proof that decolonial knowledge exists in lived experiences (of Caribbean people) rather than in institutional and scientific spaces only. The cover by Alyeska Lake illustrates three figures holding elements that metaphorically represent different practices of decolonization. We wanted these elements to conjure up multiple decolonialities: the conch represents organization, a call to action; the machete represents mobilization, the action; and the hibiscus flower represents us thriving, together.

With the yearly 6 ISLANDS zine we archive the experiences of people from the ABCSSS islands and related communities. The zine is a grassroots way of publishing, giving space to voices that may not fit into dominant narratives about people from ABCSSS communities. Because we received many more contributions this time, we wanted this third edition of the zine to be different, so we have categorized the zine according to ten themes and topics. This can function as a reading guide if you are interested in specific topics.

For more information on these themes, and the icons that represent them, you can check out the glossary at the end of the zine (p. 86–87). We have also categorized the contributions according to their form, which you can find in the index (p. 4 & p. 5).

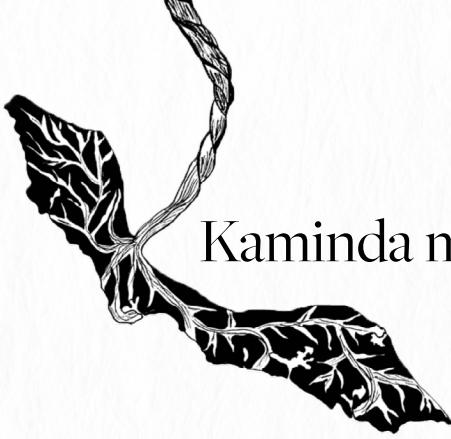
We are eternally grateful to all of the contributors who have poured their souls into these pages and shared with us intimate practices of decolonization. We are also eternally grateful to all our readers who show up every time and connect to this work so genuinely. We love being in communion with you!

We also want to extend our gratitude to Natisha Engel for working tirelessly with us on the layout and graphic design of the zine, as well as Alyeska Lake for creating the cover art representing multiple decolonialities. Thank you lovelies for helping us bring our vision to life! We are also very appreciative of Tamira Koeiman for taking the amazing pictures of our 6 ISLANDS team (and for creating the vibes that made them possible) as well as MELOLELO for designing our logo, it makes us so proud every time we see it. This work would also not be possible without the continuous support of Mama Cash and WORM (we love you, James, fellow zinester!).

Masha masha danki na un i tur!

Alex, Danick, Ichmarah





Kaminda mi Lombrishi Lo Derá



As a young girl I often snuck into my mother's wardrobe, in search for her jewelry case. It was like finding a treasure: boxes full of golden necklaces, earrings and splendid beads & bracelets. However, the one jewelry box that I wanted to lay my hands on was filled with something else.

I could always find it at the exact same spot where I had discretely left it the last time, as no one else would show any interest in it. Although I had done this often times, I always gasped when unveiling one of my most valuable treasures: my perfectly dried but still slightly disgusting umbilical cord.
Mi kabuya di lombrishi.

E Deramentu di Lombrishi

All across the globe, people practice postpartum rituals that honor a child's umbilical cord and/or placenta by offering it to the land. In many cultures the umbilical cords and placentas are usually buried under or with a tree. For some people this symbolizes ongoing life. It is also believed that the harvest determines the child's success in life. The ritual is most commonly symbolic for the child's cultural roots and connection to its birthplace. In recent decades, instead of being ceremonial offerings to a child's birth land, the umbilical cord and placenta are most often turned into biomedical waste. However, the saying "kaminda mi lombrishi ta derá" is still commonly used. Which makes me wonder, are we aware of the decolonial power it holds?

Home Going

My mother's umbilical cord is buried in Sindulang, on the island of Sulawesi.

My father's kabuya di lombrishi is buried in Otrobanda, on the island of Curaçao.

And mine is well-preserved in a jewelry case in Groningen, the city in which I was born and raised. My parents come from two different worlds, but the one thing they have in common is the country that colonized their people for over three centuries. From the moment they set foot in this country, their survival required assimilation; renouncing parts of themselves and their culture to fit into what was needed for them to thrive in this new environment. Groningen became their home, as it did for me.

In the process, much has been lost but not forgotten. My school projects always concerned either my Curaçaoan or Indonesian heritage, telling stories of genealogy, colonization, injustice and resistance. I was determined to decolonize my environment because I thought I knew what I descended from. But back then, I was exactly that: merely a descendant. My experience was still feeding into the narrative of the islands as solely being former Dutch colonies, without their own culture and history. There was still so much to learn. But how do you decolonize if you see even yourself as nothing but a product of the Dutch colonial history?

Last year I reconnected with the island of Curaçao, its language, my family, the culture, the people, the land and myself. Literal and figurative seeds were planted. This home going journey has gifted me respected elders, sacred spaces of ceremony and invaluable relationships with the island's flora and fauna. I moved from being solely a descendant to becoming a member of the community, which made me realize that for me, decolonizing the self is not so much (just a little bit) about getting rid of things, but more so about adding up, changing and prioritizing your own narrative. It has become a journey of self-discovery, and my perfectly dried umbilical cord became my guide.

Deramentu di Lombrishi as a Decolonial Practice

So what does my umbilical cord tell me about decolonization? I believe that the ancestral ritual of burying the umbilical cord fosters a ceremonial relationship with the land, creating a time and space in which territories and ecologies are not only symbolically reclaimed, but also passed onto the next generation. In a way, the child becomes part of the local ecology and blends into territorial energies that surpass their human existence. It is unclear to me why my parents have kept my umbilical cord for all these years. But the fact that it remained unburied, makes me more aware of the responsibility I carry as a child from diasporas. It allows me to think with the ancestral tradition and ask questions in light of decolonizing the self: What do I offer back to the land? What does the burying of my umbilical cord require of me? How will I water the seeds that I plant along with it? To whom belongs its harvest?

As I am writing this, I realize that we sometimes might take individual steps, but that decolonization is nothing but a communal journey. I am curious to hear your thoughts.

What if you had the opportunity to (re-)bury your umbilical cord? Where would that be? What does that require? Where will you bury the umbilical cords of your children? What will that mean for them?

Ban kòmbersá! With love,
Lecyca
holla@lecyca.com



SOUND



FREEDOM



ANCESTORS

Tembla

Tembla
den kara di inhustia
Bo avochinan ta eksalsá den bo miedu

Tembla
e chispa Afrikano ta move den bo

Den kada sèl, den kada fibra
E ta flui den bo sanger
E ta komové bo kurpa

Tembla
ku konvikshon

Turbulensia ku ta traspasá bo dolor
Koriente ku fuente den yaga
Den lamento ku ta sali di Kenepa
Den mama i papa hogando den atlantiko

Tembla
Manera bo`n sa ki bo spera
Tembla
paso maldat ta bo tras, persiguiendo bo inosensia

Tembla, mucha tembla!
Tembla manera bo pulmonnan ta gasta
kada rosea por t`esun ku ta evaporá
Manera hòmbernan straño ta ranka bo mama
Manera bo hogar ta un memoria ku bo no por mishi
kune
Manera nan a piki fruta, seka e palu, i bend'è.

Tembla
Paso nada no por sakudi bo orguyo
Tembla, paso bo a tende dje tradishon igbo di bo
tribu
Paso bo ta baila ku nan den silensio.

Tembla ku forsa di mil i un generashon
Bo ta konekta n'e lus di humanidat.

Tembla
Paso bo alma ta bula
B'a gana e bataya den e realmo.
Esun ku a machika balor a kome su mes bashí
Es ku bria sinseramente lo ta un bientu eterno.

Tembla
T'e antepasado ta move
Den bo!



FREEDOM



KNOWLEDGE



ANCESTORS

Papia ku mi

The Power of Storytelling





"We can use
mythology to
highlight truth
because imagination
must find its place
somewhere in reality.

So speak to me, papia
ku mi, even if just a bit."

Storytelling is a practice of daily life which grants you the space as an individual narrator to internalise, process, and understand histories & social phenomena in their full complexity within the broader sphere of collective memory. Written histories have a dangerous tendency to privilege a single man's narrative in literature. Conversely, the essence of oral histories from the collective memory of native communities remain intact as they are passed on. Yet, these stories are extremely diverse in the way they are performed by different groups, individuals and even the same person. Undoubtedly, oral traditions cannot be approached under the assumption that they will be able to meet Western prerequisites for authenticity, reliability, and truth. Continuing to uphold the superiority of written tradition perpetuates colonial paradigms, idealism and essentialism which excludes other cultures, practices, and communities from participating in the transformation of academic discourse — and knowledge production.

Storytelling, rather, allows both narrator and listener to redevelop their sense of self within the contemporary historical, social and cultural context in relation to themselves, each other and their community.

Our people have been able to find agency and a voice through the narration of folktales in our language and interpretations. A famous and important example of this can be seen in Nanzi orature, which achieves this by creating a counter-narrative that subverts the colonial representations of natives.



I experienced the power of communal storytelling first-hand throughout my childhood when I would hear the chronicles of the trickster spider Nanzi. These stories of Nanzi exemplify the discursive qualities of orature through their metaphorical depictions of colonial power dimensions; their relatability to the common experience of colonised natives; and their layered representation and re-presentation of (de)colonial narratives which speak to natives across multiple intersections of identity in our communities.



But fuck, the stories also just spoke to me because Nanzi is a fictitious spider yet reminds me of the human condition in so many [very real] ways. Nanzi is funny AF, clever, creative, passionate, tenacious, audacious. Pero e ta un pokó degasiado too. Sometimes selfish, sometimes lazy, sometimes 'bad'. But always human. Ora e papia ku mi, they speak to all of those [very real] parts of me. Nanzi stories raised me. Nanzi raised me.

These stories passed down by our ancestors have served as an important reminder of the power that each of us possesses: the power of creation. The power to tell your story authentically, boundlessly, and joyfully. I believe this is what it means to manifest. We can use mythology to highlight truth because imagination must find its place somewhere in reality.

So speak to me, papia ku mi, even if just a bit. Force the world to come into the world. Speak your joy, speak your healing, speak your peace, speak your love, speak your utopia. Speak it into existence. Papia ku mi.

glenpherd



INDIGENEITY



KNOWLEDGE



HOME

Indigenous perspective on the Caquetio right to Self-Determination

By Joshuar Gomez

Over the past century, the national self-perception of Arubans has gradually committed to the idea of multiculturalism. The present-day Aruban is likely to identify as either multicultural, multi-racial, White, Black or more popularly, a little bit of everything. Interestingly, however, very few Arubans openly identify as Caquetio or Indigenous. And yet, a 2003 mtDNA analysis showed that in the 19th century 73,7% of all Aruban women were indeed indigenous. More recently in a 2011 study, 73 out of 137 randomly tested newborn babies were found to be of Amerindian blood. Yet the idea of identifying oneself as indigenous is somewhat frowned upon in Aruban society, which is hardly a surprise. For more than a century now, Aruban children have been raised with myths about the long lost Caquetio Indians. This unconscious self-rejection has its roots in 500 long years of colonial erasure, that even today, continues to be fueled by irresponsible capitalism and the unnuanced use of the melting-pot theory.

My name is Joshuar Gomez and I am an Indigenous Aruban. I am the author of *Amen cu Sanger*, entrepreneur and academic student who writes and creates for indigenous Arubans. It is my mission to help rewrite Aruban history from an indigenous perspective and in doing so, contribute to the decolonization of eurocentric Aruban literature. Despite the decolonial character of my work, I believe that my bravest act of decolonization is calling myself Caquetio and advocating for other indigenous Arubans to do so as well.

That 21st century Aruba is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-nation society cannot be refuted. With over 92 nationalities, Aruba's culture has grown infused with diversity. While this rich mixture of language, expertise, gastronomy and traditions is generally



praised for the unique society it has created, not often do we reflect on how *multiculturalism* is misused as an umbrella term to describe the identity of all Arubans. In countries such as Canada, Australia and several South American nations, we have seen how the inclusion of indigenous people in multiculturalism, with the underlying assumption that they are just another group in their country, is counter-productive to their decolonial efforts.

In Aruba, for example, multiculturality is branded as our welcome card by the tourism authorities to attract more people to the island.

Most common narratives include the extinction of the Caquetios and the stories of how Aruba evolved into a nation where everyone is multi-ethnic, multicultural and therefore, welcoming to all outsiders. Unfortunately, while using multiculturalism as their marketing strategy, they also engage in practices that contribute to the further erasure of indigenous Arubans. For an easy example, visit a few local or official government websites that summarize the history of Aruba, and you will find yourself reading about the time Aruba was *discovered* by some Spanish *explorers*, who *recruited* the early *inhabitants*, or

also called *first tourists*, as *laborers*. Not only are these statements a grave misrepresentation of our history, they also reduce indigenous Arubans to a mere symbolic existence. Specifically, in the way visitors and locals are surrounded by beautiful buildings with Caquetio iconography, national museums, private collections and expensive tour guides to caves, sites and national parks that are led by stories of *dead indians* and the little that remains of *people who once roamed the island*.

Meanwhile, in non-touristic territories of the island, Indigenous Arubans who are often the kids and family members of cunukeros [farmers] lead marginalized existences and depend on their own sense-of-community for survival. Unlike thousands of Arubans who either work for the government or are exploited by the hotel industry, there are indigenous Arubans who still try to maintain a sustainable way of life on their cunucus. There are indigenous Arubans who live and work on the same lands they did back in 1767 when the first list of local farmers were created. More than 200 years of working on cunucus that are an Amerindian invention of great sociocultural, political, and economic impact. Before colonialism and long after that, cunucus will continue to be

the basis of support for small and medium levels of freedom and food sovereignty for the poorest and most oppressed people on the island. Unfortunately, their way of life is no longer sustainable with the increasing effects of climate change.

More than before, prolonged periods of drought and exuberant costs of water make it nearly impossible for cunukeros to continue producing their own foods. For many of them, crossing over to government jobs is not a viable option and working for the hotel industry is not desirable. A standpoint that is completely understandable if we take into account that the wages of the hotel industry do not properly feed Aruban families or offer a dignified existence on the now very expensive touristic island.

We know that around the world, official policies of multiculturalism intend to eliminate discrimination and racism in all walks of life. On Aruba, anti-discriminatory policies should indeed be used to recognize the diversity of our population and help prevent discriminatory behaviour towards people who actively contribute in building the island we all call home. In particular, the xenophobia against South American immigrants.

But multiculturalism cannot and should not be used to describe all Arubans, as multiculturalism does not adequately address the problems, experiences and concerns of Indigenous Arubans.

Indigenous Arubans exist and maintain in some cases the same agricultural lifestyles as their ancestors. However, the history that prevails in the mind of the everyday Aruban is one that uses colonial theories of race and blood purity to the discard the existence of any Indigenous person. An indigenous Aruban will be discarded for not being pure of blood, discarded for not knowing the Caquetio language (destroyed by colonialism) or discarded for not having the same traditions and beliefs as their Caquetio ancestors (even though we know of the indoctrination of Caquetios by the Catholic church). The erasure of Indigenous Arubans as *living Caquetios* is so successful because so many local sources of information are built on outdated colonial theories about race, which is a system inherently created to disenfranchise Native people and tribes from their legal and political status. But how do you further solidify this self-rejection in a nation that already grows up believing that they do not exist?

You offer them new ways to identify themselves and convince them that it's cool, unique and lucrative. You make indigenous Arubans look at themselves in the mirror and see a mosaic of multiculturalism. They will now see themselves as multicultural, multi-ethnic, Black, White, mixed, a little bit of everything ... but not one of them has an indigenous self-perception.

This imposed idea of being a part of multiculturalism is problematic because as much as indigenous Arubans color the cultural mosaic, their indigeneity (way of life) places them outside of multiculturalism. Indigenous Arubans are marginalized because their agricultural practices have left them outside of mainstream society and its accompanying rights. With the increasing effects of climate change on their crops, exuberant living costs, contamination of our beaches and devastation of our mondi's to build even more hotels, cunukeros and fishermen are having a hard time catching up with the changes and destructions that essentially threatens to make them into communities in crisis rather than yet another cultural community that multiculturalism applauds. As first inhabitants of the island, Indigenous Arubans have contentious claims to government

subsidies and investment of resources in sectors that would protect their cultural heritage. These claims are unique and not shared by other cultural groups, and their inclusion in multiculturalism would fail to recognize them as such. That is why it is so important for Arubans to critically self-reflect on how we identify and how much of it has colonially been imposed on us. Much of the survival of our indigenous heritage, sustainable lifestyle and protection of our ecosystem depend on the recognition of our existence.

I am Caquetio. Who
are you?



BODY



ANCESTORS



FREEDOM

Kiko ta

D&KOLONiSATION

by Kris

pa mi?

Zembla katara den bo kara
Kue mas di mi kultura
spreit e den bo kara
Mi ta kere den mi mes
Stail'i spantapara
Habri mi ala pa mi bula
Pio ku warawara

*I came here with worth,
Therefore on this earth
No matter what I get or loose
Can't take away or give me more
Cause I came here with worth*

Si bo no ke mi ku kabei krinkran
No pis mi ku weif
Mi nanishi ta grandi i bunita
Promenton's finest
Miss me ku e contour ei!

Lesa, siña, realisa, rabia i kunsumi
Mi mes tinku buska pa mi sa
Paso e konosementu ta skondí
How can we organize, how can we bring
change?
Sigi keda tolondrá.

E kandela den mi lo sigi kima
Dunami mi tambu i mi tumba
Bo'n purba kit'e fo'i mi
Lo mi rank'e foi bo man
Bo'n purba tapa mi boka
Mi presensia ta kima bo!

I don't have to be an intellectual
To be a freedom fighter

Striving for freedom
But still discovering new chains
Striving for independence
And still unlearning
Choosing violence
Cause inside I'm burning
Choosing violence
While choosing peace
It's the only way I can be free
It's the only way I can be me
Decolonize my brain
Decolonize my heart
Decolonize my eye
So I can see me, for me

The more knowledge
The more freedom fighting

Het ding is, wij zwarte mensen,
wij mensen van kleur
overal ter wereld
Willen ondanks onrecht, achterstelling,
onderdrukking en ongelijkheid
Leven en genieten van het leven
Ja, we zijn geketend en onderdrukt
BUT WE ARE THE FUCKING CULTURE
We will forever keep living and keep thriving
Showing you the way
Of, moeten we alles opgeven voor de strijd?

#AllMyLifeIWillNotWorkForWhitePpl
#AllMyLifeIWillNotWorkForWhitePpl
#AllMyLifeIWillNotWorkForWhitePpl
#AllMyLifeIWillNotWorkForWhitePpl
#AllMyLifeIWillNotWorkForWhitePpl
#AllMyLifeIWillNotWorkForWhitePpl

Ik ben een vrije zwarte vrouw
Ik werk en ik zweeg
Nog steeds voor een witte man
-2021

#FUCK THEM WHITE PEOPLE

Mi tinku siña mi mes reakshona
Kontra mi propio automatismo
Di laga e makamba bai prome
Kaminda ta'mi tin voorrang

Mi por mira mas I mas
Ma ketu bai mi ta siegu
i lam
Kòrsou, Karibe, Afrika
Ki dia nos ta lanta riba?

Ik vertel jou over mij
Niet jij vertelt mij over mij
- Glenn Helberg

No mòrs
Si ta makamba bibá na Kòrsou
Ta Papiamentu ku'ne
Of ga terug naar je eigen land!
Duna yu di tera posishon
I duna Papiamentu su honor.

Fighting to get free
Only to realize
The only real freedom
I will ever see
Is the one found internally



SOUND



FREEDOM



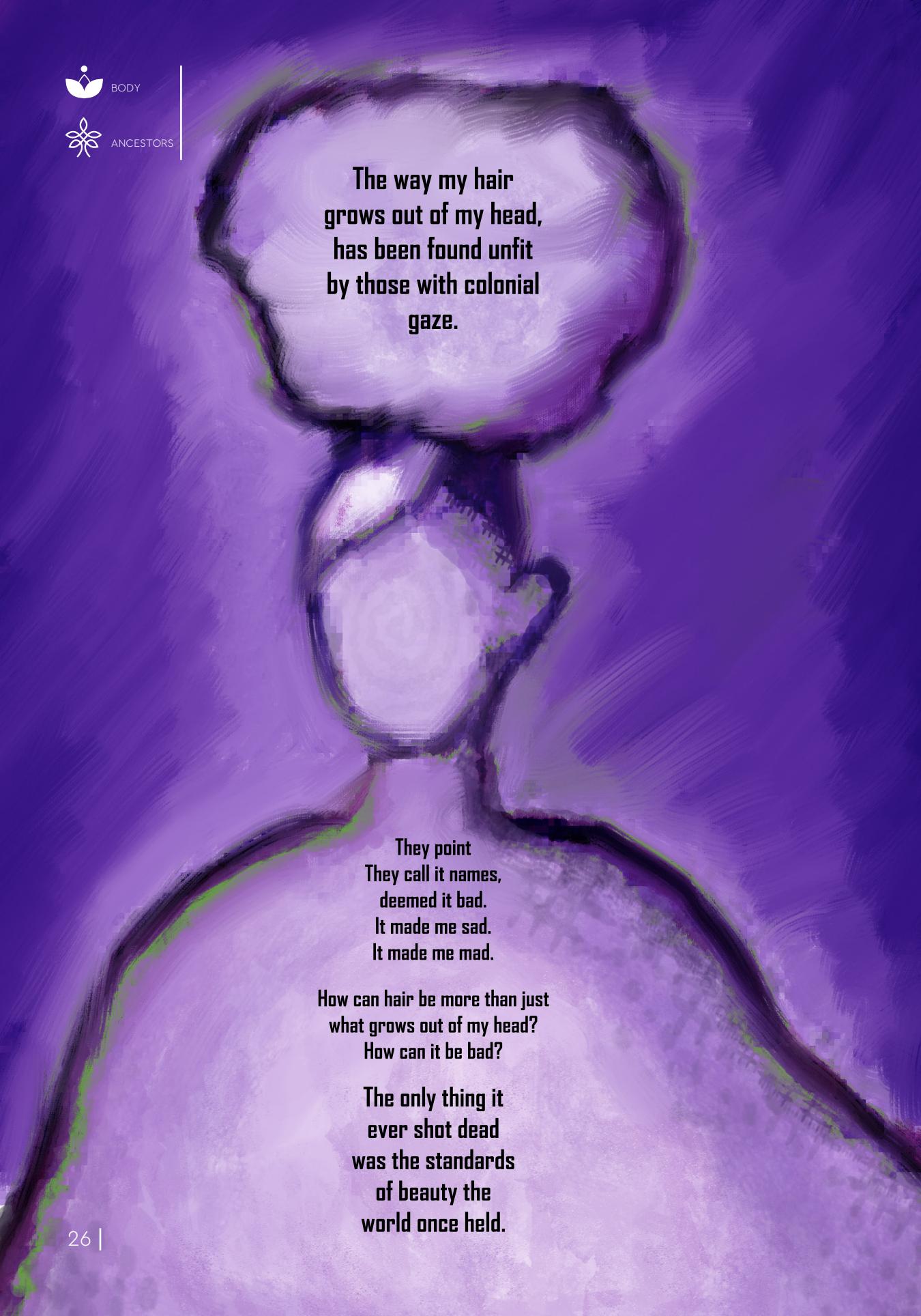
'Freedom Ride' by Ichmarah Kock (@clitoria_erekta), 2020, Ink pen on paper.



BODY



ANCESTORS



The way my hair
grows out of my head,
has been found unfit
by those with colonial
gaze.

They point
They call it names,
deemed it bad.
It made me sad.
It made me mad.

How can hair be more than just
what grows out of my head?
How can it be bad?

The only thing it
ever shot dead
was the standards
of beauty the
world once held.

Decolonial musings

Developing a personal, Caribbean and decolonial way
of knowing as ethos and practice

Danick Trouwloon @yo_danick

Introduction

The third edition of 6 ISLANDS zine – much like the two previous editions, but this time perhaps more explicitly – seeks to give meaning to the term decolonization through the exploration of everyday, Caribbean practices. This exploration aims to reduce the scope for misappropriation of the term decolonization – a potentially powerful tool – by mainstream institutions, who cannot but use it to continue to oppress and marginalize Caribbean communities. This essay is my contribution to that exploration. Here, I centralize musing, thinking, pondering, and rambling about decolonization – something that I engage in every day – as a decidedly decolonial practice.

My personal commitment to decolonization within the ABCSSS and wider Caribbean context builds on the work of many who have come before, me as well as those working in parallel or in direct relation to me. This includes academic, activist, and artistic work from around the globe by those inhabiting lands to which they are Indigenous as well as those no longer Indigenous to place¹, whose umbilical cords are (un)buried in strange soils – like the Caribbean – that may or may not over time become home. It includes all of the Sunday morning meetings, brainstorming sessions, workshops, healing events, and film screenings;

all of the zine contributions, Instagram comments, Zoom calls, WhatsApp messages, and email exchanges which to me have come to mean being part of the 6 ISLANDS team. It also includes the readings, lectures, and discussions which comprised the Interuniversity Course Caribbean Studies offered by KITLV, and countless other interactions taking place in predominantly academic and predominantly Dutch spaces in the early months of 2022. I am greatly indebted to this (decolonial) work and pay homage and deep respect to its legacy.

Because I believe that it is critical to decolonize Caribbean realities – and the systems and structures that uphold these realities – in this short essay, I want to speak to the importance of decolonizing our ways of knowing. I would argue that colonial ways of knowing inevitably confine the decolonial imaginaries that we allow ourselves to conceive and dream of. With that, colonial knowledge closes off our access to potential decolonial futures. So, with this essay, I am inviting you to ponder with me the perhaps abstract question of what knowing can and should be. I offer this personal essay, centring my own way of knowing, as a potential reference point for collectively imagining and actively constructing decolonial Caribbean futures together ☁✨

¹I have recently come across this terminology from (Williams et al. 2018), and have so far found it useful for navigating and name different ways of belonging to place.



La Siren Mermaid Collage by *Mirlande Jean-Gilles*

(De)colonizing knowledge

What does it mean to know something, to know anything at all? How does knowledge come about? How can knowledge be (made) useful? I'm asking you to not take these questions for granted as you embark with me on this essay (and, perhaps, as you read this entire zine).

Since re-embarking on my academic adventure seven months ago, I have been asking myself these questions frequently. Often, when I ponder these questions, other questions come up. Do (groups of) people *know* differently from others? Is there such a thing as a Caribbean way of knowing? If so, what distinguishes Caribbean ways of knowing from other ways of knowing? How do Caribbean ways of knowing relate to Western-scientific ways of knowing? And, admittedly, is any of

this of consequence?

In asking these questions, I am joining a growing movement of academic and non-academic actors working to decolonize (scientific) knowledge. It is hard for me to describe or define this movement, which consists of infinite threads working to undo the scientific endeavour's vast colonial legacy, whose many manifestations differ across the globe and between disciplines but are consistent in producing knowledge in service of empire, of single truths, and of master narratives. It is clear to me, then, that this must be an inherently unsettling movement. To hold any meaning, the decolonization of science and knowledge must unsettle hegemonic ways of knowing; it must challenge master narratives.

Seemingly trivial, yet fundamental, questions arise in this debate: if we decolonize science, is it still science at all?¹ My answer to this question is just as fundamental, and equally as simple: *sir, if it is the colonial that makes your way of knowing scientific, I want none of it.*

What way of knowing do I want, then?

Before I lay my exploration of that question bare on these pages, I want to emphasize that I am approaching knowing and knowledge as inherently situated. I am not claiming any authority over what decolonizing knowledge is or should be. Rather, I am searching for what my own decolonial Caribbean way of knowing might be. I am trying to understand decoloniality as a personal ethos and practice. As pertaining to me and to my relationships with the people and the places around me, as well as the events to which I am contemporary. I am developing a way of knowing that is personal. Relational. Appropriate to me, as I navigate the world at 26, living in Amsterdam, capital of the metropole, yet unequivocally an island kid, proudly and fluidly identifying and presenting as a neuroexpansive² Black woman. Simultaneously understanding that none of these identifications are fixed. That next year I will be 27 (and would have written this essay completely differently would I have been given a chance), potentially living anywhere, and maybe less entangled with racialized identifiers.

¹ This has not been posed to me directly but is an example of the colonial rhetoric that still persists in university halls and finds its way to my ears.

² A rejection of neurodivergence (which suggests deviation from a norm), coined by Ngwagwa (2022), specifically for Black disabled people.

Being a YDK might mean something entirely different to me, my claim to a Caribbean identity might evolve.

I am trying to say that, in sharing my personal search for a decolonial way of knowing with you in this zine, I am fixing my thoughts and ideas in form and time. Archiving them, as it were. This presents a fundamental challenge to me, as my way of knowing is not fixed, but always in flux. I will try to overcome this challenge with the following disclaimer: *way of knowing and being always changing*. In other words, do not hold me accountable to any standard you may think I lay here, however low, or high. In writing this essay, I am explicitly not seeking to confine myself to a single way of knowing or being, in perpetuity. Instead, I offer this as a potential reference point, above all to myself, around which other situated ways of knowing – multiple decolonialities – may flourish.

My decolonial, Caribbean way of knowing

So, what situated way of knowing feels appropriate to me, right now, as I write this rambling essay?

Well, above all, a way of knowing that is firmly rooted in lived experience, as opposed to theory disconnected from context. And, if Caribbean realities are experienced in community, then my knowledge of these realities must be communal as well. This requires me to reframe knowledge as something that emerges from experience and becomes consolidated through interactions with others, rather than something that can be generated, created, or produced. It requires an embrace of decolonial, communal, Caribbean practices as constituting the essence of my personal way of knowing.

Let me name a few of these practices. The Caribbean has a longstanding tradition of oral history and ole talk – knowledge which emerges and is shared through community in oral form (Wilson et al. 2019). Community writing can similarly be understood as fostering a communal and relational way of knowing, which was crucial in furthering the fight for freedom on Curaçao in 1969, for example through revistas such as Vitó, Kambio, and Ruku (Groenewoud n.d.). And what of musical practices, like the embodied experience of dancing the tambú, as a way of knowing who we are, where we come from, and where we're going (Jong 2012)? Or shared food? To quote Francio Guadeloupe and Erwin Wolthuis (2016, 228–29):

"To know the Caribbean is to have tasted or at least heard of Callaloo soup. [...] Different wherever and whoever prepares it, Callaloo can be understood as an invitation to appreciate the interconnected worlds that our collective experience of western colonialism and resistance to that brute social fact has brought about; an embrace of compositeness."

And, finally, an ode to pondering, musing, and rambling as a decolonial way of knowing the Caribbean and its place in the world. Rambling conversations allow me to return to alignment with myself and my environment. Musing constitutes a way of knowing that, for me, right now, seems fit for the purpose of thriving in this world. It allows me to let go of linearity and embrace chaos as chronic entanglement. As a Caribbean story with no beginning, no middle, and no end.

My own, situated understanding of

decoloniality, as shared with you in this zine, has emerged from long, rambling conversations with Alex and Iky:

"I like the idea that things get meaning when they are shared. We [6 islanders] don't think of knowledge as an authority. Like, akinan [na Hulanda] academia ta gewoon un authority on cultural production. There [on the 6 islands] knowledge and culture are so interwoven with who we are, that it is much less about institutions."

"And knowledge is negotiated in that way. There's a back and forward in that way. It's not like the ivory tower says this and the masses need to accept it."

"Ni eens politiko."

"Even though the zine is in a written form, we're trying to be playful with what it means to write things down."

Some concluding thoughts

So, what does it mean to know decolonially, in a Caribbean way? I have posed this question as an invitation to long rambling conversations, without having an answer. But – if you allow me to draw some personal, preliminary conclusions from this rant-in-essay-form – I am beginning to understand Caribbean ways of knowing as communal. As relational, woven out of incalculably diverse discursive threads that come together to make meaning of a complex and tumultuous history. As ways of knowing that take meaning from the relationships between people, the (is)lands they inhabit, the lands they (may) have left behind, and the Caribbean Sea that connects them to each other and the world. Producing an interwoven knowledge that takes form through ole talk and oral debate,

through community writing and musical practice, and through shared bowls of warm stew. It is this relationality, I am beginning to find, that makes Caribbean ways of knowing so powerful.

As I conclude this essay, I keep thinking of The Salt Roads by Nalo Hopkinson. In my reading, the novel asks similar questions about Caribbean ways of knowing. I read this novel in Caribbean community,¹ thoroughly enjoying the collective process of uncovering the various ways of knowing that Hopkinson effortlessly solidifies into a uniquely afro-Caribbean consciousness: the goddess Lasirén. It is in this context that I wish to leave you with the following quotes from the novel, which to me speak to the uniquely Caribbean challenge of knowing anything with any certainty at all, in an ever-changing world, as an ever-changing people:

*"I'm born from countless journeys
chained tight in the bellies of ships.
Born from hope vibrant and hope
destroyed."*

[...]

*"Time does not flow for me. Not for
me the progression in a straight line
from earliest to latest."²*

[...]

*"clouds I am flying through. How do I
know them as clouds?"*

[...]

"How do I know anything?"

I read the many lovely contributions that comprise this zine as a contemporary, ABCSSS response to these questions, collectively saying:


*This is how we know,
as we fly through the clouds*



Let us, then, harness these collective ways of knowing to construct decolonial Caribbean futures together ✨

¹ Shoutout to our lil BPOC book club 🤙

² This reminds me of the following quote from A Small Place (Jamaica Kincaid), also read in our Caribbean book club community: "To the people in a small place, the division of Time into the Past, the Present, and the Future does not exist. An event that occurred one hundred years ago might be as vivid to them as if it were happening at this very moment. And then, an event that is occurring at this very moment might pass before them with such dimness that it is as if it had happened one hundred years ago." Indeed, my way of knowing is not chronological.

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Community Writing

Workshop

In keeping with the theme of this edition of 6 ISLANDS zine, in November 2021 we held a writing workshop to collectively explore community writing as a decolonial practice. Under the graceful facilitation of our host, Nicole Römer, we discussed what community means to us, what forms decolonial practice can take, and how writing can be a valuable tool in the process.

Nicole created an intimate, safe space for the community to explore and create. Using different prompts as a guide, we explored notions of ‘community’ and ‘home’. Each participant received a notebook, a pen, and a pencil to pour down their thoughts on paper, based on Nicole’s prompts or whatever was occupying their minds at that moment. Some thoughts were shared, some were kept within the realms of the participant’s notebook, and some intimate insights have found their way into the next section of this zine for us all to enjoy.



Aside from writing, we discussed how the different ways to decolonize are not always easy. We also touched on the importance of taking time to embrace joy in life. One of us pointed out that while we are constantly being resilient, we should also allow ourselves to embrace joy. And during the break, we had delicious soup and snacks from the ABCSSS islands and got to know each other a bit better. ❤️✨

We want to give a massive thanks to the lovely Nicole Römer ([@nicoleromer](#)) for moderating this intimate session and providing a safe space for the community.

Thank you James ([@raezor beam](#)) and WORM ([@worm_rotterdam](#)) for providing us the physical and financial space to organize this truly nurturing afternoon.

A huge thanks to Alfie and the [@caribbeanancestryclub](#) family for the delicious soup!

And thank you, 6 ISLANDS family, for always showing up with vulnerability, grace, and authenticity. You humble us with your energy. We look forward to many more community gatherings!





COMMUNITY
WRITING



HOME



FREEDOM

e ta e hilo di diabel
cu ta chupa e bida
di tur local no ta di dje
pavia di barconan anciano
tur cos ta asina

awo nos ta tuma un paso bek
y ta bisa ta basta
nos ta bai bek
ta traha espacio pa tur loke
a wordo prohibi
nos ta corda tur locual a bai perdi

nos ta laba e tera cu nos lagrima
dierti e partinan di nos mes cu
nos a dera profundamente
aden nos mes
congel'e
pa conserv'e pa futuro

pa proteh'e
for di e wowo malo
cu ta tuma
tur local e mira
- Laura K



A Part Of My Initial Thoughts On Decolonial Practices by Rufino Henriquez

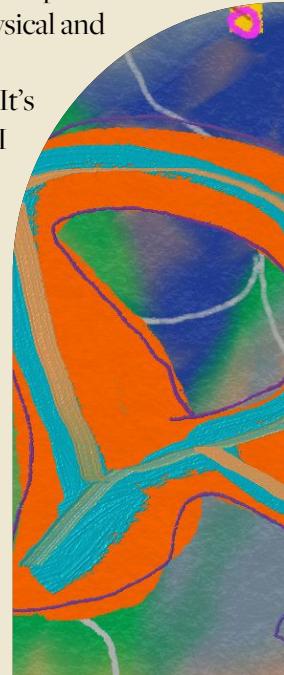
I grew up in a diverse household in a diverse neighborhood and went to a diverse school. The diversity came mostly from physical traits and ethno-cultural backgrounds. Gender and sexuality however were very patriarchal.

Because I live in the intersection of these things, I'm of different cultural backgrounds (both ethnically & race but also subculture wise) and gender nonconformity and homosexuality, I always felt a very weird disconnect and like I'm always negotiating my space, being and place. It made me feel like I'm too complex for an already existing community. In both physical and online spaces I feel like I need to create new ones!

I engaged in decolonial practice, and it was when I sing, dance, swim, write and act. It's when I perform. It are those moments when I feel free, when I feel as myself, when I feel safe and honest. In moments that I go to these kind of spaces and engage with others through conversations or doing the activities I described before. It's before the idea of generating money comes in, audiences comes in, whether or not I want to perfect and/or recreate it comes in.

It's when I'm in the moment, the nano-second after I create something. I get that feeling of pride and fulfillment. I don't get the chance to judge myself yet nor reflect I'm just happy and in ecstasy. The same in social settings when we all did something fun together or created something and are all in that high or rush.

This is one of the reasons why I created a first one man performance to help me explain myself through an authentic lens in 2019 and a workshop where I guide people to create like I do following up on that in 2020! Because of the Covid pandemic and my lifetime mental health struggles there's been a halt to the project.



I struggled a lot with depression and suicidal thoughts throughout my life and aside from that I also experience social anxiety, especially in spaces I don't feel safe in. This doesn't just mean dangerously unsafe spaces but most importantly neutral spaces. Spaces where there's a presumption of an Imperialist White Supremacist Capitalist Patriarchal culture. In most artistic spaces that I find myself in I notice there's a lot more diversity and openness in what's allowed to be expressed and ways to be. I also notice it in Queer spaces, more specifically when those intersect with QPOC spaces (being a person of color or POC is inherently Queer in my opinion and in my case being of Caribbean & Latinx/e heritage I always also take that in the definition of the term). Since there's a lot of divergent people in these spaces I feel more safe to be myself fully. But it isn't just about expressing some form of queerness.



I strongly notice it with day to day tasks and practices that aren't necessarily a part of any social taboo or stigma. I experience the discomfort when I write in public spaces, such as now while I'm writing in the train. I'm sweating a lot, I'm very tense / on edge, my heart is beating faster. I know that people around me are just busy living their own lives and really aren't paying mind to me but that knowledge doesn't stop my body's physiological responses from happening. These responses are 10 times fold muted in Queer spaces. Just functioning in general when it comes to Imperialist White Supremacist Capitalist Patriarchy is an exhausting, overstimulating and detaching affair for me. I don't know what it is exactly that lies behind it but having queer spaces is a first step to address this. Which ties into why I'm busy creating these spaces. Since I'm an extrovert I really need people around me in order to manage my energy. I'm a highly sensitive person but as opposed to most HSP's I'm really not an introvert. I do need time for myself everyday but not because people exhaust me but because our intersecting cultures do. It's as if I'm assaulted on the daily, a fight

every single day both internally and with the toxic energies around me. For the longest time I couldn't name this... Or rather I was too ashamed and afraid to name this. Most times I experience a devastating loneliness and I grew up extremely isolated from the people around me so my fear was that if I expressed this I would get reprimanded and experience an even deeper loneliness and isolation. There have been a couple of ideas that I've had throughout my life in order to address this, including suicide. But suicide just isn't an option for me, I simply refuse to do it! I just can't let those toxic energies win! There's simply too much to do in my life, too many life missions on my heart so the next option was creating Spaces.

Spaces where I DO feel comfort, where I DO feel connections and where I DO feel like myself. These spaces must inherently be Queer, be Creative and Artistic, about Radical Love, curious, fun and free. No price of admission, no auditions or solicitations. A mixture of school, a library, a museum, an organization and community center. An intersectional queer safe space where learning about the universe, about ourselves, creating, and sharing space is the main objective. Not just for QPOC's, even cis str8 able bodied affluent white men of certain ages find their home here. Overall everybody feels more free here than this man has ever felt in his life before. The idea is a team and a chosen family that is my sense of a community and I'm too tired to extend anymore time before I create it! THAT is the space that I need to create. Yes, I know, these sound like lofty goals, kumbaya and naïve but why care what people think about it now? Has it truly been tried before? I'm gonna ask this question again with the knowledge that, late ms bell hooks always reminded us of, we live in an Imperialist White Supremacist Capitalist Patriarchy so have we TRULY tried this before? Keep your cynicism to yourselves because, like our detractors always love to spit out, facts don't care about your feelings!



 CW// NUDENESS
MENTION OF BODY
IMAGE/APPEARANCE

COMMUNITY
WRITING

FREEDOM

BODY



Years pass before I learn that my body is, in itself, an act of resistance. My skin perceived - by some - as a call to arms, my rolls quiet rejections of societal ideals.

For years I dreamt. Dreamt of a comfortable, bare-skinned existence. A free existence.

Free of calculations of how my weight distribution may appear to another, free of judgment and commentary so fiercely and mercilessly justified.

Years pass before I understand the origins of this judgment; a projection of a seemingly endless web of societal expectations. It takes time before I stumble upon the necessary vocabulary and when I find it, I come face-to-face with a few undeniable truths.

Bodies like mine are fodder for the violence of the colonizer, and colonization?

Colonization is not dead.

It holds us tightly in its vice grip, laughing as people say:

"I'm not a racist, but..." or:

"she would be so much prettier if she lost a bit of weight", or:

"I'm not against [insert race] people, I just happen to be more attracted to white women."

It's just a preference."

The colonizer laughs, knowing that these statements are proof of a continued hold over us. They know that our prejudices have been carefully programmed. They know our preferences are not happenstance.

The colonizer dutches us close, hoping we don't discover the toxicity of the patriarchal values it has instilled, praying that we do not learn that fatphobia is of its creation, and rejoicing each time its closest comrade capitalism stomps out our acts of defiance.

Together, the colonizer and the capitalist remain vigilant. Ever present, ever aware, always ensuring that neither one relinquishes control.

I unpack.

Item after item.

Layer after layer.

Question after question.

Proverbial suitcases of aggressions and transgressions I have spent a lifetime carrying
on my bare back.

I assess.

The comments on my curves,

queries about my rolls,

assumptions about my color.

And as I do, I realize that our freedom is feigned, our emancipation a falsehood, and that
change will require more of our years before she truly comes.

Yet I am unafraid. My body may be an act of resistance, my skin may call some to arms, my
rolls may reject societal ideals. But they are mine. And in them, I am home.

In my body,

I am strong.

In my skin,

I am warm.

In my rolls,

I find love.

And finally, I am no longer dreaming. I am taking the existence I have,
and I am
living
instead.

Why I write

by Janae Renten

She tells me: 'He is probably depressed; I feel for him. Well, not literally. I don't know how he feels. I just respect it, I guess'. Hmm, I respond with a look on my face as if I'm about to say something emphatic, yet intelligent at the same time. We are sitting on the floor of my studio apartment, drinking wine and eating sushi like the adults we are. We are eighteen years old and miles away from home. Miles, as in a 9-hour flight. The bankcard in our wallets, the wine in our glasses, and the 'girls night' we planned a week in advance, confirm that we're definitely adults having adult conversations about our adult friend, who is probably depressed. I remain silent as she continues: 'I definitely respect it, *his issues and all*, but I also think he should get it together at one point. It's been years and I don't think he is really trying'.

Yeah, I respond.

I dip another piece of sushi in spicy soy sauce before shoving it in my mouth. The taste of sticky rice, fresh salmon, salt, and spice washes over my tongue as I savour this moment. 'What do you think?' she asks, slightly annoyed by my apathy. Truth be told I'm not thinking at all. I am simply here enjoying all that life has given me, but I guess it's my turn to give my adult opinion.

'I agree with you.' I finally say.

It seems like he likes complaining about his problems more than finding a solution. Also, he should just be a bit more, I don't know, grateful or something. That being said, let's talk about something else.

Ignorance: A lack of knowledge or information about a certain topic or experience.

She texts me: 'I'm sorry to cancel again, my anxiety is just keeping me in bed. I hope you haven't left yet.' I'm sitting on my bed; dressed and ready to leave the house. I feel disappointed by the late cancellation because, well... there go my Friday night plans. I take off my shoes before finally responding: 'it's fine, I hope you will feel better and still manage to have a good night'. I press send as quickly as I regret sending it.

Good night? I think to myself. She is probably paralyzed by fear. Maybe I should have said something better. Too late. She is already texting back and then... nothing. Offline again. Shit. My fingers jolt into action: 'do you want to call about it?'. I press send as quickly as I hope she will say no. Truth be told I don't know what to say over text, let alone on the phone. Honestly, I don't know how to bring any sense of comfort to her in this state.

Ignorance: A lack of knowledge or information about a certain topic or experience.

He tells me, he can't talk to his parents. 'They just don't understand'. His only hope, now, is to find a psychiatrist. After finding a job of course; these *happy pills* of him are not cheap and his insurance won't cover it fully. He tells me how taking them is not a guarantee. How some days they make him feel human, while other days they drag him back to bed- mind foggy, body heavy, soul drained. 'That's just a way it is,' he says with a smile on his face, but I can see the tiredness behind his eyes. I smile back. I tell him I love him and that I'm happy I met him. I tell him I'm happy that he is here - as in here - alive. He hugs me and we start making our way to class. As I walk next to him I feel powerless and sad. Powerless because I don't know what to say; sad because we don't talk about this enough.

Ignorance: A lack of knowledge or information about a certain topic or experience.

I sit on a bench, drained by icy rain, waiting on the metro as I do on most days. These days I'm used to waiting on things. Waiting on metros, trains, sun, and most importantly, an end to this pain. A pain that is not visible, and hence easier to ignore- or at least it used to be easy. The skeletons of my mind have recently found a home in my body and heart. As I sit here- body heavy, chest clenched- waiting. I think back to the conversation I had with my friend when we drank wine and ate sushi. It feels like ages ago, yet it's only been a year.

Time is funny like that; the mind is funny like that. How naive I was. Now I understand that the house I live in and the clothes that I can buy can never replace the feeling of wanting to be alive. With that thought, I hold back my head in an attempt to catch the tears that I know will be shed. Keep it together, I tell myself, wait till you are home; do not cry in public. Not again. The metro arrives, and an older gentleman opens the door for me.

With the tears at the back of my eyes, I smile.

Empathy: the ability to understand and share the feelings of another

I write for myself, first and foremost. I place this pen on this paper to make sense of our world, and the complex emotions that come with living in it. Up until that day

at the metro station I had kept the word depression hidden under a cloud of shame. You see, back home we don't talk about mental health. Consequently, my own internalized stigma kept me isolated and alone for months. If only someone had told me about mental well-being, I think back. Well, I can't rewrite the past, I can only choose what to do with it. Therefore I write for myself, and in doing so, I write for my community. I write for people, like me, who know what it's like to feel heavy

and empty at the very same time. I write for the children who grow into adults with self-deprecating thoughts, heavy bodies and empty smiles. I write for the members of our community who think that mental health recognition should stay inside the doctors office and outside of the ordinary conversation. I write for those

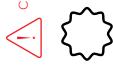
who, like I once too, simply don't understand. As a writer, there is nothing as confronting yet comforting as your thoughts staring back at you on a piece of paper.

They scream: 'Look at me taking up space. Look!' They remind us that these feelings, these thoughts, are worthy of being seen. They are worthy of being expressed. They tell us: ALL of you is worthy. All of you deserves to be.

You deserve to be here :)



'Wilhelmina drowning - View from Parke Virginia Dementriëa, Aruba, 2063.'
Illustration by Ietmarah Kock, 2020. Marker on sketchbook paper. Photo: Ietmarah Kock, 2022.





you called our resistance a
riot, we called it survival.
while you debated our humanity,
deciding that we couldn't
speak up for ourselves.
we ignored your silly attempts
to further dehumanize us.
you see, we were never void of
sound. your ears
were just never meant to
understand the waves 
it's a nuanced world, baby.
stop trying to place us within
the limits of your
imagination.
we are a mosaic of displacement.
a broken diaspora laced with
gold. we exist in multiplicity
deeply rooted in soil and sea.
deliciously embodied sensuality
you'll never get to touch.
our life force is drippy & there
is so much that lives in us that
you have killed in yourself.
we do not exist in reaction to
you, or in spite of you. our
humanity comes in many forms &
and we are entitled to rest,
imagination 
anger, pleasure, opacity.
our humanity is ours. to. have.
and ill spend lifetimes trying
to remind us of that 

by @stingslikealex



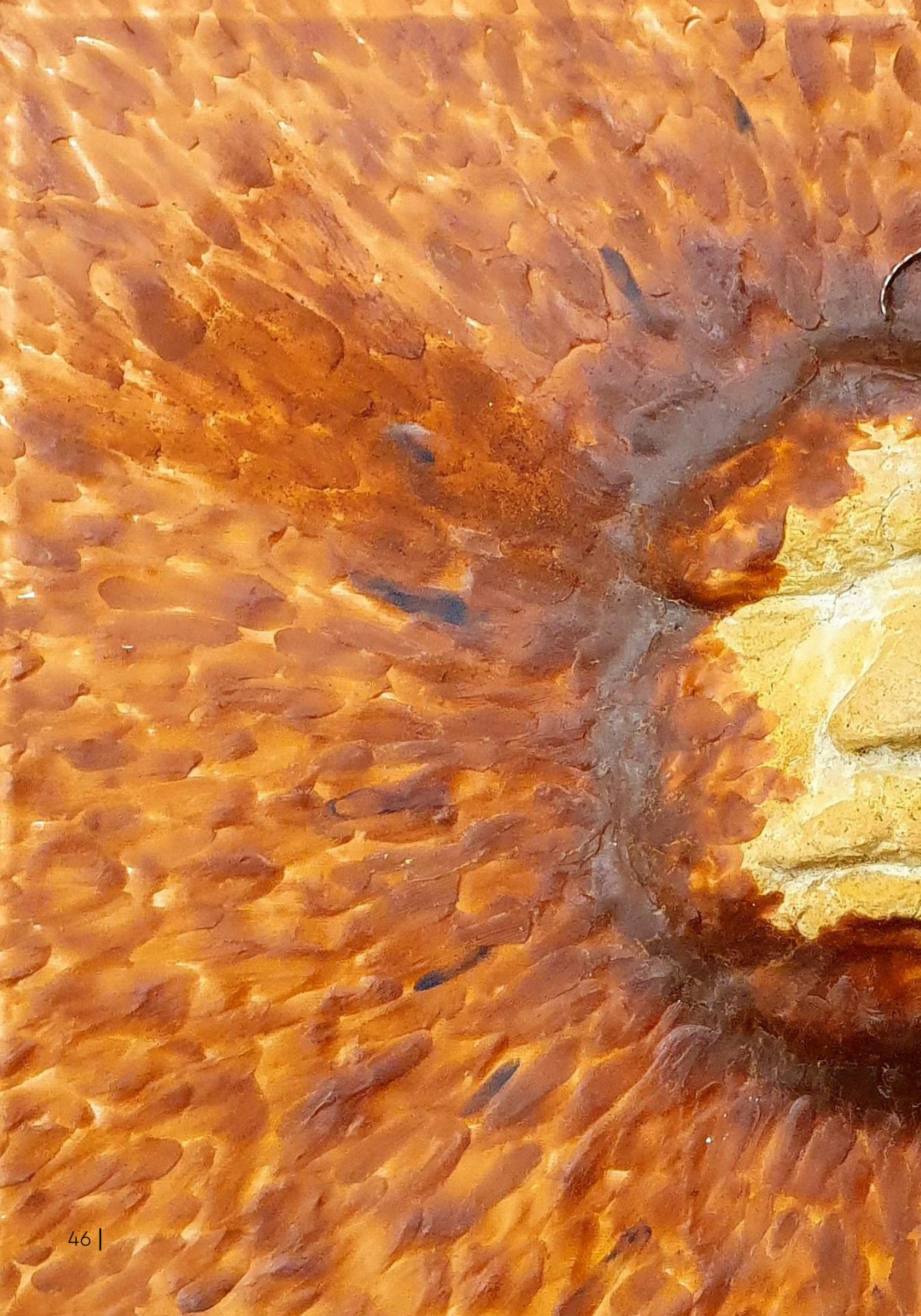
waiting for you ears 

Cara di solo

Un herencia di nos pasado
Dor di mira e cara di nos solo
Asina pa reconoce nos mes
Pa por sigui bai dilanti umbes

A legacy of our past
By looking at the face of our sun
So that we recognize ourselves
To continue on

Face of the sun



This work is an homage to our sun, which is the manifestation and personification of us being represented through our ancestors that survived so we could thrive.

The face on a cotton canvas is created with modelling clay and mixed with annatto/rucu powder, using a mould I made of paper maché of my face. Also worked with red and a bit of black wax on canvas.

And added some annatto/rucu powder on the wax.

And a ring was added above the head as a form of a crown.

[@justinreinircroes](#)

 TW// EXPLICIT
LANGUAGE, NUDITY
SEXUAL VIOLENCE

 MENTAL HEALTH

 BODY

 QUEER

mi tonto zin t'q'aum



Attempting to decolonize my pussy - by Tittel Del Mar

Do you remember the first thing someone, whoever, said to you about your genitals? I'll give you a minute to think about it. Write it down.

When I started writing this article almost a month ago, its title was 'Decolonizing my pussy'. I did research. Hours upon hours of it. I read articles, plunged into forums, looked at artwork, you name it. I had this whole body planned out about the patriarchy, racism, and how being white-passing gave me a first-hand view of what post-colonial residues can look like, and so on. But if I'm frank... a pineapple* be tired, yo. So, so tired. And a pineapple did absolutely not expect to be confronted with so much while working on this piece.

Thinking about decolonizing my pussy made me come to the realization that my pussy is, in fact, traumatized. The initial idea was to talk about how the Caribbean macho man traumatized my pussy, which he absolutely did, but that isn't the core of the problem.

My trauma starts off, like for many of us, at home. In a space where I was taught that my pussy is both the most crucial thing (because what else would it be if it had to constantly be mentioned and checked on), and yet the one thing I wasn't allowed to ask or know much about. For over a decade, I was told that menstrual bleeding is when the "bònsi tin òw," as in the vagina is hurting. It wasn't until I was almost thirteen years old and my period still

hadn't shown up that I was brought to the pediatrician, and they informed me what everyone was so eager to happen to me for all these years.

Like... what the actual fuck.

Over two years ago, I started practicing kundalini yoga, and I began learning how vital my pussy is. How completely out of balance my energy was, and how I was using sex as a crutch because I wasn't giving nor receiving the type of intimacy I required. I was stuck in autopilot mode.

I still have nightmares about getting raped at twenty-one, of when my boyfriend climbed on top of me and informed me that it was my duty to provide him with pussy whenever he required it. I get stuck remembering how I told another boyfriend that it's okay for him to seek sex elsewhere because I was physically unable to provide him the pleasure he deserves. Even though I really didn't want him to, I felt like it was my obligation.

Then there's the other boyfriend who told me that if I didn't get an abortion, he'd kill me. He would go back to his ancestral land and make sure his spirits burn me alive from the inside out. And don't even get me started on how the women I dated neglected my needs entirely. Turns out, it's not just the Caribbean man that could be toxic.

* A pineapple is what I started using to refer to my students in a non-binary way for all of them to feel included and safe. It stuck, so I use it everywhere now.

Fast forward, and it's the first year of the pandemic. I found myself in a new partnership, and the way this person treated me and my pussy was so different it blew my mind. I didn't need to ask for *anything*.

I don't know how to put it besides being treated like royalty. When I inquired why he approached my body like that, he was surprised and told me that that's how it's supposed to be. I was incapable of understanding. It took me months for it to actually sink in. For I had, of course, convinced myself that this was just the honeymoon phase. He was just obsessed with me, but, as always, that too shall pass. Right?

It has now been many, many months, and this brilliant person still devours me as if I am his favorite meal ever. Through him, I have learned that this is, and forever should be, the standard for my body. Suddenly talking about vaginal discharge, pelvic pain, menstruation,

PMS, and my mental health around these subjects became normalized. Moving forward, new boundaries have been put into effect, and there is no going back, but there is still plenty of work to do.

Recalling the initial concept for this article, I have concluded that this is purely the beginning of my journey into decolonizing my pussy. There is still so much to unpack, discover, and especially heal from. There are still plenty of conversations to be had, memories to revisit and append, views to reconstruct, and walls and stigmas to demolish.

Which reminds me, how do you feel about what I had you write down at the start? The road is vast, and there's plenty of space for all of us, pineapple. You're welcome to join me!



Autonomous Creative Expression and Place-Based-Education on Bonaire

By Andrea Simal Nava

Art is an important way to look in to the depths of our own being, both individually as well as collectively. So much so, that it would be incomplete to speak of decolonization practices, without considering autonomous creative expression. Contextualized education, which greatly includes the local context in its curriculum, plays a paramount role in prompting and facilitating this type of art making. For my bachelor thesis for the Breitner Academy in Amsterdam, I interviewed a handful of art teachers and culture experts on Bonaire, regarding the topic. The main goal was to investigate to what extent they could include the local context in the art curriculum and what they experienced as the main obstacles in doing so.

To this day, education on the island of Bonaire is organized according to the Dutch education system. To name a few examples: the books, the curriculum, the exams and even the quality controls are the same. Whether this is a good thing, a bad thing, or a thing to change at all, is an important discussion. For my thesis however, I chose to focus on

the singular fact that education on the island comes from elsewhere. It is therefore important to create space in the curriculum for local context, knowledge and needs. *Place-Based-Education (PBE)* theory advocates for just that. The following example taken from the science curriculum in the Falkland and Ascension Islands, illustrates the issue quite neatly:

The schoolchildren of these two UK Atlantic overseas territories long followed a curriculum that, particularly in its learning materials, felt foreign: 'Badgers, squirrels and foxes living in British woodland areas are great but not entirely relevant.' To counteract this, conservation officers enlisted the support of environmental scientists and educators to design localized biodiversity materials focusing on terrestrial and marine fauna and flora such as the king penguin, the sooty tern and Commerson's dolphin.

The art assignment that made the biggest impression on me back in high school, was one which the teacher had designed specifically for us. It was obvious that it was not in the books, because it was built around a poem, song and historical story from Curacao.

It was simple: turn the song *Lamento di Mosa Nena* from Izaline Calister in to a painting. It was super exiting because I had never used Papiamentu or historical characters from our own islands in art class before. Prompted partly by my own experience in high school and following the line of thought composing PBE theory, I started to ask myself questions regarding art education on Bonaire: are we teaching kids on the island mostly about western art in museum spaces such as in New York and Amsterdam, which kids cannot visit during class? Or do we take our children to see what contemporary artists are doing on the islands today? When we teach our kids about the caves in Lascaux, do we also show them local Indian inscriptions, such as those around *Boka Onima*? I genuinely believe we should do both. The issue is that western-European art and art history are still overrepresented in art education books all over the world. Although there are some amazing initiatives, such as the art trip to Curacao that some Bonairean high school kids get to go on, the inclusion of the local in the art curriculum on the island still needs some more TLC.

The interviews reveal important obstacles that need to be addressed

on the island regarding localized art and culture education. Art teachers experience relative freedom in what they teach, but they also find a lack of resources: little to no school books or updated compilations of art and culture history of Bonaire or the ABC's. The stubborn art-is-a-hobby-and-it-will-not-get-you-a-paid-job idea is still prevalent, and it's still keeping high school graduates from choosing a career in the arts. The interviewees are also optimistic though. The enthusiasm for art and culture classes seems to be growing on Bonaire. Where only a handful of high school students would choose for humanities in the past, there are now more often full classes. The art scene also seems to be growing on the island: people seem more enthusiastic about art and cultural heritage, there are more projects than there used to be and autonomous art seems to have become more visible in daily life. This slow, but noticeable change is arguably an indicator that the time is ripe to invest time, effort and money in autonomous creative expression, culture projects and localized art and culture education on Bonaire.

Personal Note

My bachelor thesis led me to make a series of artworks that revolve around Bonaire. The first work

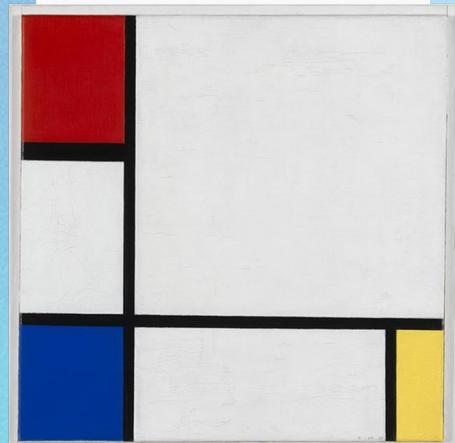
reflects on the flag as a national symbol. During my literature study I stumbled upon the legislation document, which specifies the official design of the Bonairean flag. It was designed by a man from the U.S.A and adopted in 1981. Coincidentally, it consists of pretty much the same colors as the most famous paintings by Piet Mondriaan. Piet Mondriaan is an icon of modern art, and modern art is highly criticized for being Eurocentric and white male dominated. It is also a type of art that is overrepresented in the art world and in art education. I tried to capture this coincidence in the collage *What are the odds?*

The other two works are more introspective and reflect on moving to the Netherlands after graduating from high school. I started to think about how kids on the island study in order to leave, in order to study some more. What does this mean? And how do we feel about having to leave our home to get smarter? To create a better life for ourselves? Does that mean that staying on the island will keep you dumb? Does that make our home island a backward place? And is home a place that is bound to be left behind? Do we get to go back home? And is it possible to get back to the same place we

left behind? I tried to capture this limbo-like feelings and dizzying doubts in the video collage *Mi Ta Bai Hulanda* and the poem *Pal'i Koko*.



	Geel (Pantone 012C)
	Wit
	Blauw (Pantone 287C)
	Zwart (Pantone Black 6C)
	Rood (Pantone 199C)



What are the odds? by Andrea Simal Nava



Scan this QR Code to watch the video collage
Mi Ta Bai Hulanda

Pal'i koko

Koko koko

Pal'i koko

Keda rustig bou di dje

Pero wak pa bo no keda largu

Paso e koko te bai kai

riba bo kabes

Sali kore

traha duru

bin bek rustig

bou di dje

Koko koko

Pal'i koko



SOUND



HOME

Lessons from 'The Sinking Ship'

Decolonising our perspective on manifestations of neo-colonialism in the Caribbean

Ponderings by: edrieënna hashantley maria brandao



On many islands throughout the Caribbean, the election period is characterized by signs, flags and t-shirts with catchy slogans and huge promises. One distinctive feature of some is also the upbeat and catchy chorus of the 1986 calypso song by Trinidadian marine-turned-calypsonian-turned-parliamentarian, Winston 'Gypsy' Peters. This song is infamously credited with ending the almost thirty-year rule of the National People's Movement. Though, forty years later, we know that it did not 'end', but merely 'interrupted' their rule, this song remains a prime example of the (political) power of a mobilized people.

Political discourse in the Caribbean (and global) context remains dominated by themes of neo-colonialism, corruption, and underdevelopment. In this article I hope to add to the conversation by exploring what the manifestations of neocolonialism can tell us about the positionings of the people in post-colonial Trinidad. My hope is that these findings may give us new eyes through

which to see the post(-)colonial reality on our islands. To do so we will first consider three manifestations of neo-colonialism in 1986 Trinidad that I think are still relevant in on our islands today – colonial nostalgia, economic dependency, and inertia.

Colonial nostalgia

Public discourse has no shortage of individuals – mostly white male European historians – who speak longingly about a 'return to the golden age'. However, there is also no shortage of voices who condemn this narrative and the harmful and oppressive nature of the hegemonic practices associated with colonial rule. This sense of 'longing for former imperial and colonial glory' is known as colonial nostalgia. Interestingly, it also manifests among the formerly colonized. When it does, it is often disregarded as despondence, ignorance or fear of the country's post(-)colonial (re)construction. As such, instances of colonial nostalgia are often ignored or rejected by those in power. One logically asks oneself '*Why would those who struggled under (the effects of) colonial domination and exploitation long after any part of it?!*

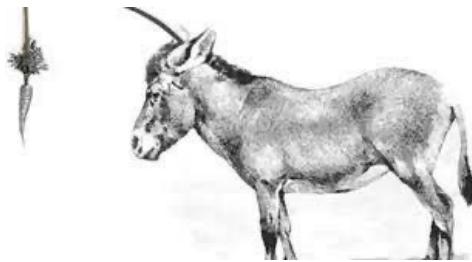


In his song, Gypsy sang about a Trinidad that '*sailed majestically in her day with wealth that few surpassed*', about a Trinidad once being known as a '*beauty*' and '*a friend to one and all*'. These are values and attributes that give us insights into the citizen's collective consciousness; a reflection of how Trinidadians saw themselves and would like to be seen. The passion and longing with which citizens speak of their island's past status or conventions may help us to understand which values, customs, and needs hold priority today. The manifestation of colonial nostalgia viewed from this lens is not a desire to return to days of subservience, slavery, or sugarcane plantations, but rather an expression of the longing that many citizens had to know who they were, what they stood for and that their needs and those of their allies were met.

Economic dependency

The question of how those needs can best be met often revolves around finances. Which brings us to the second symptom of neo-colonialism, economic dependency. To illustrate this, I again turn to Gypsy's words:

This is an SOS from the Trinidad
Location, seven miles off the coast
of Venezuela
SOS SOS Mayday! Mayday! May-
day! Help! Help!



Calypso is an extremely culturally specific genre of music. Gypsy does not start the song by announcing the geographical location of Trinidad in relation to Grenada, Sint Lucia or Barbados with which they share an appreciation for this music genre; but to Venezuela, a Spanish-speaking South American country that they had less significant ties to at the time. Additionally, Gypsy ends the song with the following suggestion:

*Somebody put in an application to
the World Bank
Probably we get some help to do
the repairs
We don't know, we don't know.
You tell we what to do.*

These extracts illustrate the dependency on outside support for local development, which is often in the form of foreign investment and loans. Empirical evidence has consistently shown how economic dependency perpetuates (over) reliance on external structures; and how it simultaneously displaces the most vulnerable of citizens. (Zuckerman, 2015) Gypsy shows how unclear it is that the economic

and physical displacement they experience can be linked to global power structures like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Put simply, while the people publicly roar '*The money must come from somewhere!*'; their whispered fear is that '*We cannot get anything done without outside help.*' The Trinidad becomes a ship sailing alone on the Caribbean Sea without a trusted shore to dock on in times of storm; while those aboard are left feeling like they have no one to turn to. No one, perhaps, but their elected leader – the captain.

Inertia

Unfortunately, the captain in 1986 Trinidad was not elected, as was the case of George Chambers who succeeded Eric Williams in 1981 after 19 years as party leader.

But sadly Eric Williams passed away

*The ship hit rough water that day
Someone turn the bridge over
To a captain named Chambers*

To make matters worse, during captain Chambers' sixth year in office, Gypsy was able to immortalize his contribution to a collective three decades of political corruption and mismanagement with these words:

Now please remember, I'm warning you

For thirty years she had the same crew Who hold the keys to her vault So we know who's at fault.

Rough waters, a sinking ship and a suspicious captain and crew. It comes as no surprise that a part of the chorus rings:

*Shall we abandon ship?
Or shall we stay on it, and perish slow?
We don't know, we don't know*

Here we see a third symptom of neocolonialism, inertia. Paralysis may explain why "*the same crew*" was able to '*pilfer*' the ship and passively get re-elected for three decades. It may also explain why Gypsy only identified the person responsible for appointing George Chambers '*someone*'. The people find themselves in a situation where their elected officials are confronted with the full burden of running a nation in accordance with the rules and regulation, of a system created by those who once sought to oppress them. A system which often forces these same elected officials to accept loans and '*aid*' under unfavourable conditions.

This collective inaction is caused by a sociopsychological phenomenon known as diffusion of responsibility. Put simply, when anyone is responsible, people feel less personally responsible. The '*someone should*' mentality

takes over. Neo-colonial power structures distance the people from the responsibility of holding their elected officials accountable and actively deciding the course of their country and make their role within the liberation movement unclear.



Conclusion & Discussion

Before I give my final thoughts on this topic, I wish to layer the reader's understanding of my work and the subjects I consider throughout it. Firstly, it is important to note that though I refer to 'the Trinidadian', know that the intersection of race, gender, religion, and class are also important components which informed the individual experiences of all involved. There is and will never be a singular type of 'citizen' in any nation. Secondly, I wish to make clear that though my emphasis was on depicting the incapacitating influence of neo-colonial rule, citizens have consistently found incredibly creative and adaptive ways to resist (neo-)colonial exploitation and work towards (collective) liberation (Hébert, 2016). Lastly, neo-colonialism should be seen

as a natural progression from colonialism and should in no way imply ineptitude or incompetence on behalf of the citizens (McLeod, 2000). A progression characterized by struggle, hesitation, regression, and – given the right conditions – growth, renewal, and prosperity.

The sinking ship gives us a new lens from which to view neo-colonialism as a period of renewal and gives useful indicators for how we can start to move past it. Colonial nostalgia reminds us of the importance of developing and maintaining a national consciousness; the economic dependency shows us how unreliable and self-serving existing global power structures are; and finally, the inertia reveals that it's time to have serious conversations about our own uncertainties and insecurities. It is only then that we can complete our decolonization.

*Now it's up to you, it's up to me.
To make her worthy to go back to sea.*





Always here

A perspective on living in between
the Netherlands and Aruba.

and there

By Gyonne Goedhoop

You hear it too right? Izaline's voice singing this song. If you don't, go search up the song if you can.

I'm writing this piece from the comfort of 'my' island, Aruba. To my right I see the Renaissance (or Seaport for the ones who know) marina with the boats. Fishermen are cleaning some of the fishes on the deck that they caught. All the while the sun is shining at its thirty degrees celsius. I just had a meeting with a good friend of mine that I've known since kindergarten somewhere here at the marina. We were out of contact for a while, but not out of touch. She's one of my closest friends now

(again). This, is is day in the life of this Caribbean kid being able to live 'in between'. Just three weeks ago I was at Schiphol airport, waiting for my departure to escape the netherlands. Nowadays this is for more reasons than only the cold. I've been thinking about where I want to 'settle' the coming years. These thoughts make me uneasy, because I have aspects of 'home' in the netherlands and in Aruba. Welcome to the liminal space of a Caribbean kid that constantly is trying to define what home means to them.

'Home', a static; fixed structure for many. A fluid journey for me, the search in the liminal space is ongoing. Where uprootedness is at the core. Nowadays I try to channel these thoughts and healing processes in my projects, one of them being the BeRightBack.BaiBin Podcast..and not just in my anxious thoughts I have at night...

When my mind wanders to the notion of home, **cas**, I think of a few things. The mere fact that in Papiamento language the word 'cas' can mean 'to feel at home' and home as the infrastructure itself.

*Mi pais ta un isla hopi
dushi kaminda mi lombrishi
pa semper ta derá...*

-'Mi Pais'

by Izaline Calister

Cas

When I try to counter my anxious thoughts I think of what cas means to me nowadays. After more than 10 years in Europe. But it still means.. soundscapes of the Papiamento language echoing through my mind, the way my mother's voice sounds, the sound of melting butter in her big black cooking pan, but also the shape of Aruba as an island has etched its way into my mind. Nowadays it's also meetings with old-new friends, working remotely from the places I used to hang out at as a little kid. It's inbetween, the new place.

Some would argue that all of these memories, most private emotions embodied within me, are also interwoven with the colonialities of island life. One of the languages we speak, for example, Papiamento, is a flower that bloomed through the walls of the systematically imposed dutch language, but also having this language as one of the elements at its base. A perfect example of this complexity.

As a third culture kid, my immigrant parents traveled from another place to Aruba. My grandpa actually being a big contributor (from Suriname) in the education department in the first half of the 20th century here in Aruba, I still sometimes don't feel like I fit into that mold that is called *Arubano*.

Ambiences of resiliency, thoroughness, laughter and joy are at the root of our existence and also the medicine that kept us going. Because a postcolonial society mimics the same hierarchies that were imposed upon them by colonial (settler) powers, as they are being oppressed by it. It's so ambiguous, wanting to belong, being rooted here on the island since I was a kid. While at the same time having the privilege of being fluent in dutch gives me a linguistic privilege that a lot of other Aruban's didn't have. Which in turn made me feel more left out.

Oh, the irony that is postcolonial logistics of Caribbean island life...

*Mi ta
un tiki preokupá
pa mi baranka, mi lugá
Mi no por mira den futuro i
mi no sa kon kos lo ta
-'Mi Pais'
by Izaline Calister*

We move and we shake (things up) —

Like many and actually most Caribbean people, migration and moving back and forth is something considered normal. They take their languages (and make new ones) ; ways of dancing; food and everything else and somehow know how to make something new out of it, yet preserving what they bought.

The liminal space that is the Caribbean region is infused with many stories of many different people. Don't get me wrong, we persevere; we are the embodiment of Joy. Seaking of joy, for example: Carnival! It was not made for the enjoyment of the spectator mind you, it was concocted by the souls of formerly enslaved ancestors of perseverance; disruption and mere joy. Carnival is now a microcosm of enjoyment for many, but never forget your position as a spectator.

I have to be honest, living for a long time in the netherlands puts me more and more in the seat of the spectator towards things happening on Aruba. I want to make sure I never fully land in that spectator role.

Positions in the island family dynamics

Aruba is part of what is formerly known as the 'netherlands antilles', but nowadays is in the context of the ABCSSS islands that were and still are connected to their former colonizing country that is the netherlands. As such is the codependent relationship with a power driven parental figure and their children, such is the relationship between the ABCSSS islands and the netherlands. Not to homogenize the experiences and histories of these different islands, because they all have their own history and stories and not to forget to mention the erased Indigenous lives that gave life to these islands before European settler colonization happened.

They are connected through institutionalized dutch language, through the education system, through the judicial system and governmental system. All of the forms we legitimize 'value' (in money, but generally also what we see as high in value or legitimate or high in quality).

Where do we pump our money into? What do we deem decent? Who do we trust, give our lands to? What choices are we making that cater to the preservation of feelings of home?

It's always a precarious situation because the thread of these power dynamics is still present if we for example think of only the relation between Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao where the latter can be seen as the favorite child of the netherlands

if we follow the colonial logics as a toxic family dynamic. This was also a topic during one of the panels of the dynamic conversation that took place during the charity festival of KULCHURAMA by Canoas di Caribe. Curaçao can be seen as for a long time being seen as the 'favourite' child because of how much economic and political value it had for NL in the colonial era where explicit chattel slavery of black and partially indigenous people was a thing. A lot can be said, but the institutionalization of the terms 'the west' and 'the east' from a eurocentric dutch perspective is real. A way of fitting these geographical places and the oppressive systems in the imperialist colonial project. For example Curacao, situated in 'the west', had a lot of the dutch/white directors from and in Curacao to rule over 'the rest' of the ABCSSS islands.

Giving Curacao the position of the eldest child needing to look over their younger siblings. The parent's favourite, an instrument for the control of power while also being at the mercy of 'the parent'. Aruba, for example, tried to break away from this dynamic, leading to a political (neocolonial) construct called 'status aparte' in 1986. On the 10-10-2010 this (neo) colonial dynamic changed & Curacao and Sint Maarten got a similar 'status' as Aruba and Bonaire, Saba and St.Eustatius (Statia) became overseas 'dutch' territories. This did not change much of the dynamic with the toxic parent. That is I anticipate the reason

why most people in the Netherlands don't know the difference between de ABCSSS islands, always only knowing some cultural things about the island of Curaçao. But rarely of the rest.

Maybe it's that I'm tired of explaining where Aruba is in a country that colonised it in the past and is still politically responsible for many bureaucratic

processes. Or maybe I just really miss my mom's voice calling my name – not the first and last name, because we all know what that means :). But for now it's neither here or there, I'll be right back because I'm living in between.

*Mi
pais ta un isla
hopi dushi kaminda mi
lombrishi
pa semper ta derá...
-'Mi Pais'
by Izaline Calister*

Digno

E ta
 Afro kurasoleño
 Digno
 di eksistensia
 E ta.

Afro Karibense
 Digno
 Di Rosea
 E ta.

Afrikano
 Digno
 di alimento
 E ta.

Digno di felisidat simplemente
 paso ela kana eksplorá paisahe di su kuriosidat,
 E la laga riu di lagrima basha, su harí a toka shelu

No tin merito.
 Standarte di oro pa bo ser onra
 Bo ta keda eksisti si bo ta kòrda
 Ta onra
 Kòrda ta onra

Digno di para den milagernan di humanidat
 Ser presioso
 E ta

Yen reklamo ku sobribiente no ta heroe
 Yen gritu pa tapa wowo i sigui pa dilanti!

Fei kí tempu un beibi tin di meresé apresio den wowo di mama
 Fei kí dia morto tinku traha pa despedida.

E ta
 Afro kurasoleno
 Digno
 di eksistensia
 E ta

Afro Karibense
 Digno
 Di Rosea
 E ta

Afrikano
 Digno
 di alimento
 E ta



CW// DEATH, GRIEF



MENTAL HEALTH



HOME

G R I E F

By Antoine Bowers

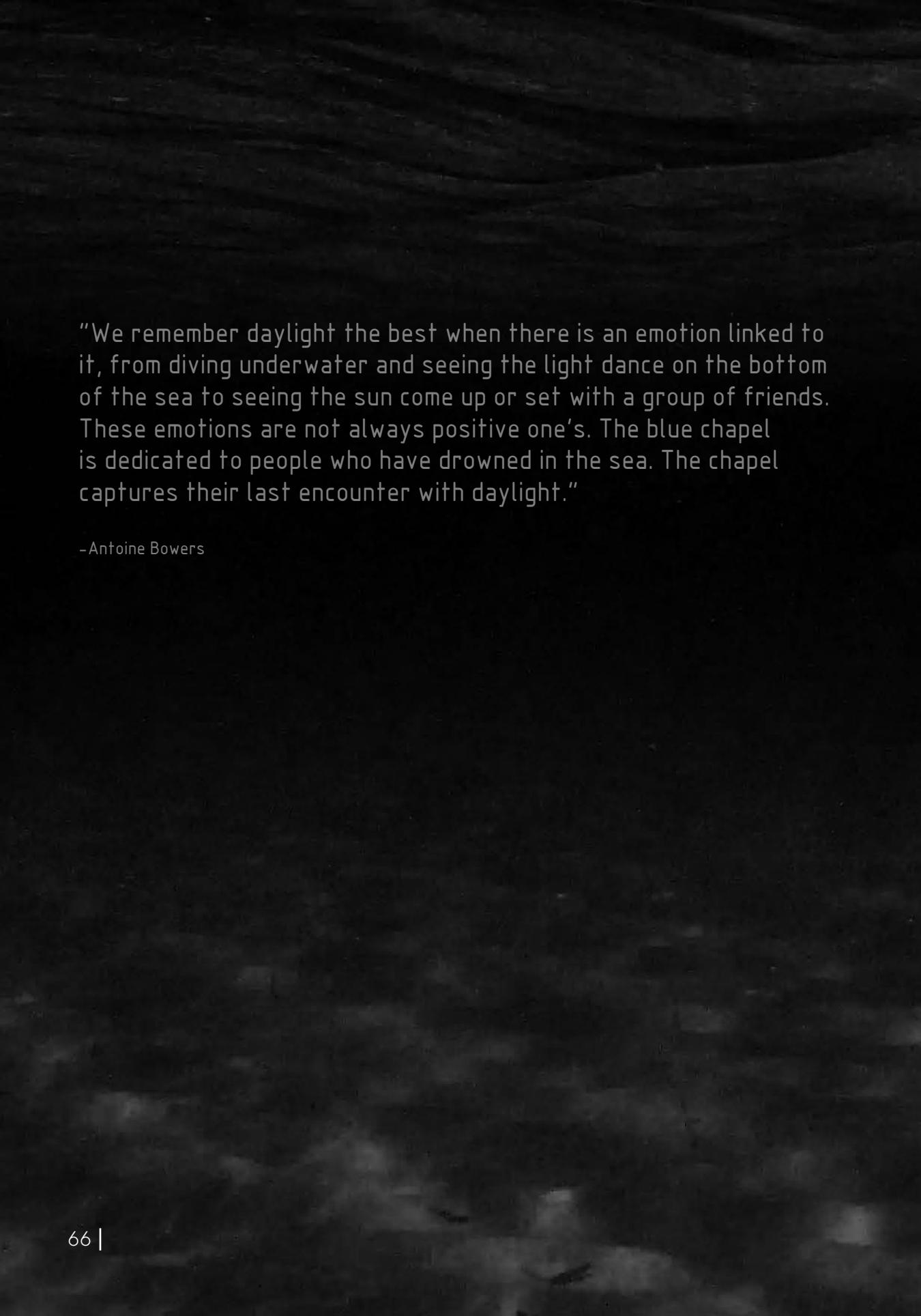
Grief is a process I don't have much experience with. My first personal and close interaction with grief was when my father died in 2017. I didn't understand what was happening. My brain was all confused. Feeling demotivated for the first time ever in my life. Feeling as if my time stood still while the rest of the world continued. It felt like wiping out while skateboarding and hitting your head. You wake up confused, your body hurts, people asking if you're ok and not being sure if you are. What baffled me the most is that I was only allowed one day leave from work. Asif 24 hours is enough to grieve you parent.

Back in 2014 I designed a pavilion that worked with the five stages of grief. The assignment was to design a space that does something with daylight, I came up with the blue chapel. A route towards an underwater chapel on Aruba, where I'm from. I wanted the dancing lights and different types of colors in light and contrast between the different spaces. At the time I had no experience with grief and tried to understand grief by translating the stages to physical spaces. I wanted every part of the route to represent a different stage and that it is reversable.

You start in bright sunlight and walk down a staircase, you arrive in a deeper space, in the shadow of the sun, you keep walking through this space, deep and straight. The only thing you see is the sky if you look up. The next staircase descends to a darker more narrow space. It's dark here, you feel gravel under your shoes and walk towards the blue light. You hear the gravel less when you reach the chapel because is becomes sand. It's quiet. It's blue. It's beautiful. Is this what you see when you drown? Is this my last interaction?

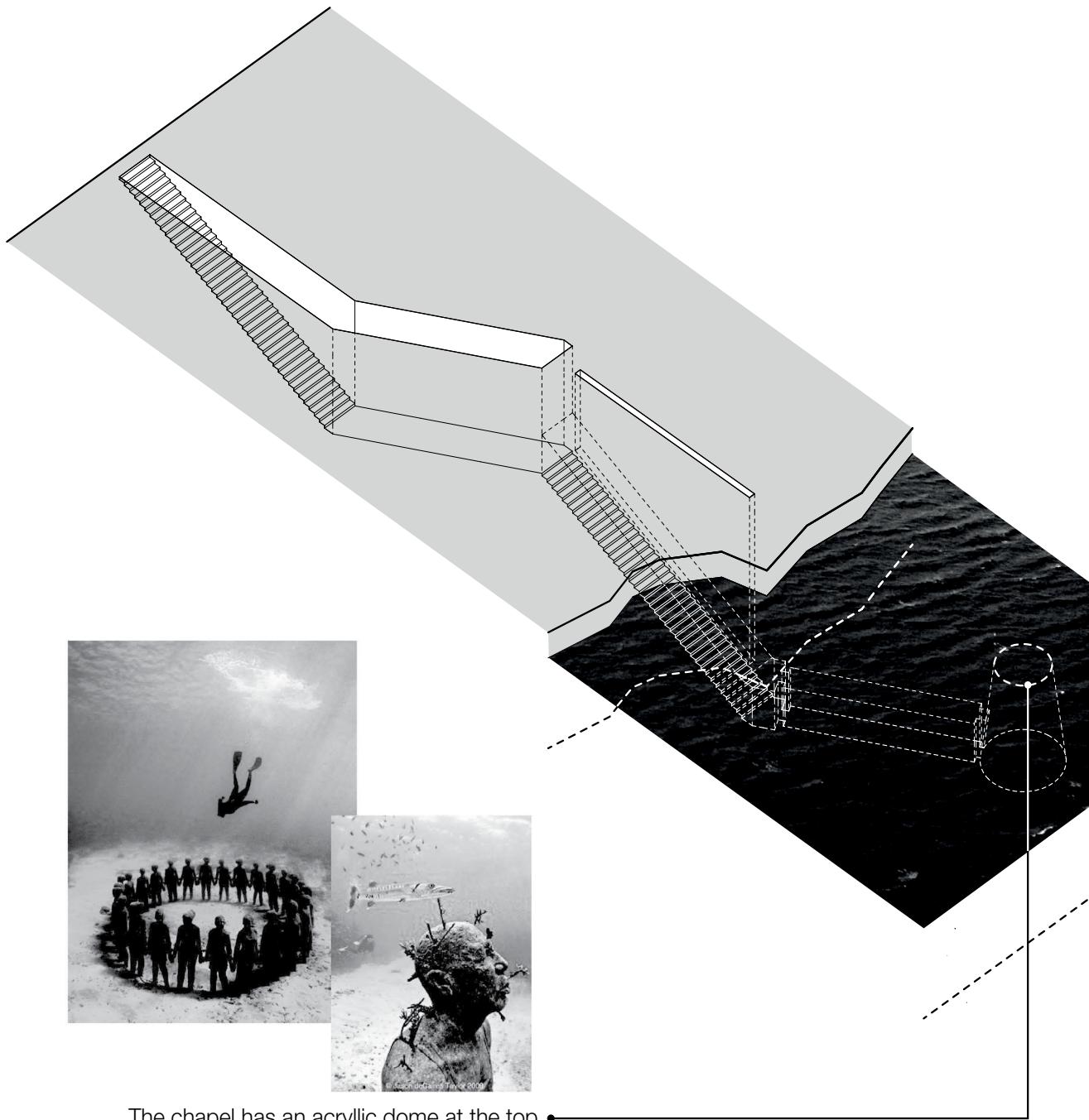
Grief differs per person. It's not universally measurable. Everyone grieves in different ways. I see grief as a process that comes and goes. I compare it with waves. The amount, size, time and impact of has on your surroundings differ every time. One of my ways of grieving is turning on a candle every now and then. One I designed specifically for my father.

Looking back, blue chapel would be a place I'd visit on wavey days. A place where it's ok to grieve.

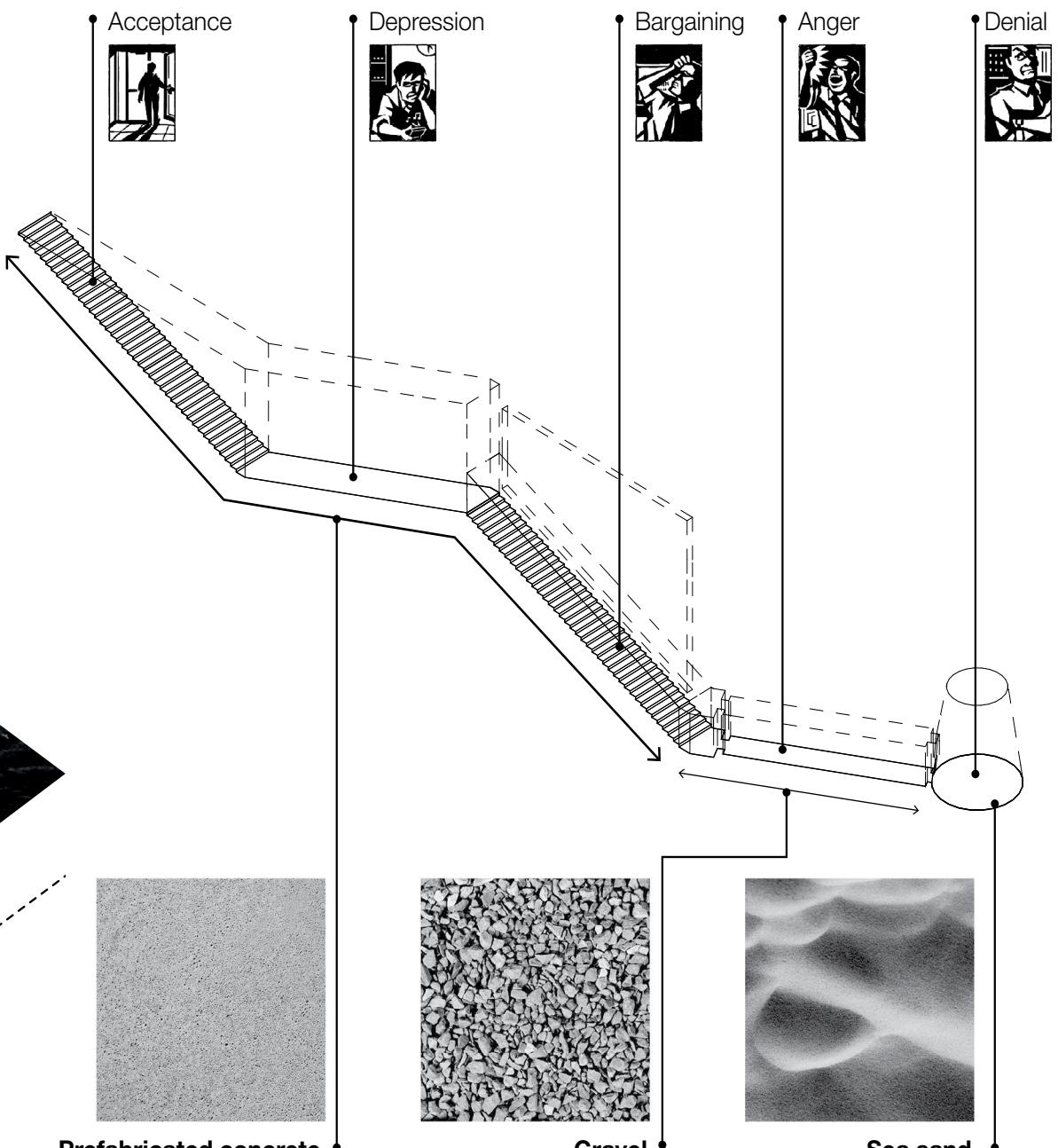


"We remember daylight the best when there is an emotion linked to it, from diving underwater and seeing the light dance on the bottom of the sea to seeing the sun come up or set with a group of friends. These emotions are not always positive one's. The blue chapel is dedicated to people who have drowned in the sea. The chapel captures their last encounter with daylight."

-Antoine Bowers



The chapel has an acrylic dome at the top.
This dome is then surrounded by statues
that represent people who have drowned
and protect the dome at the same time. The
sculptures are made from a coral friendly
plaster.

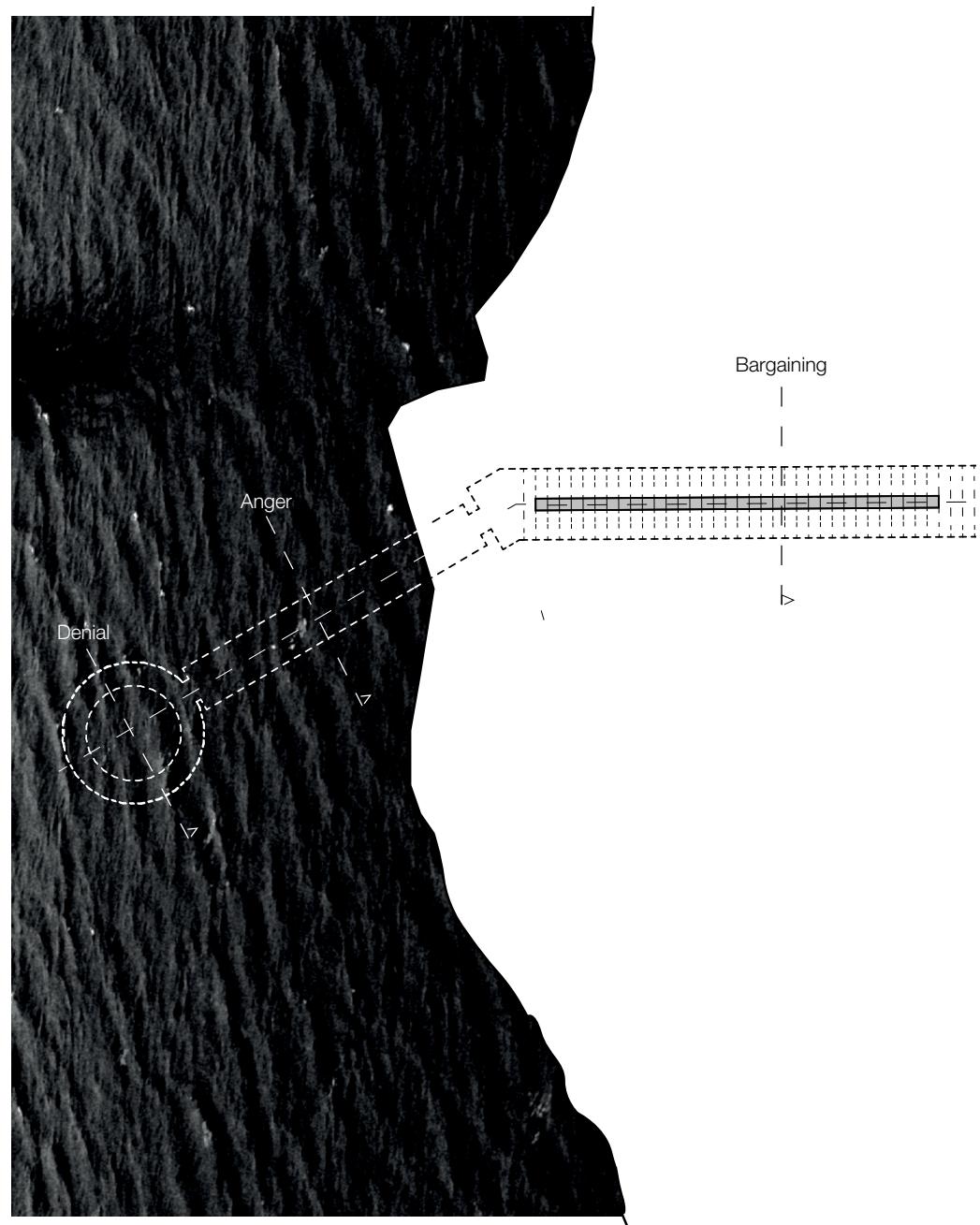


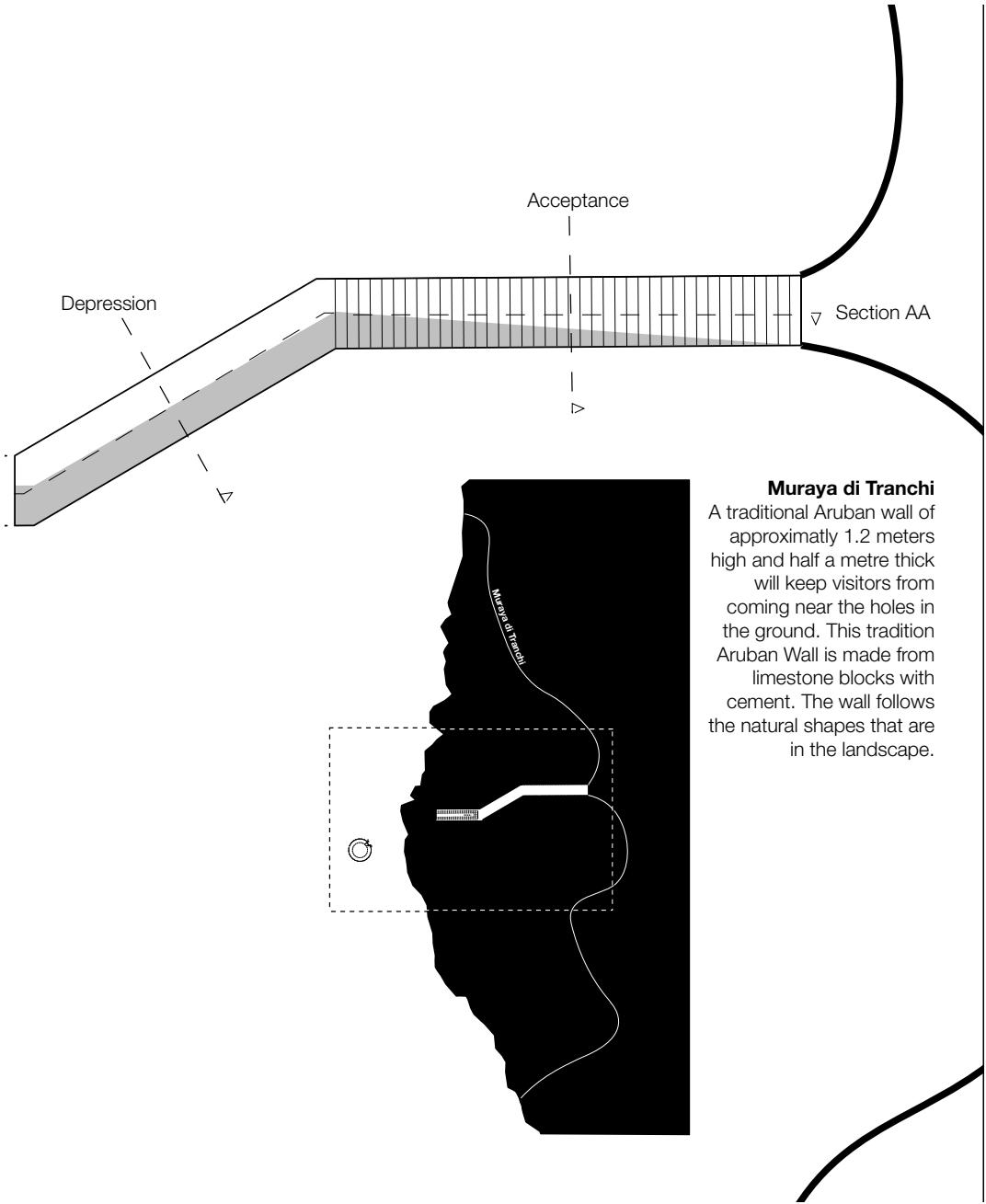
Prefabricated concrete

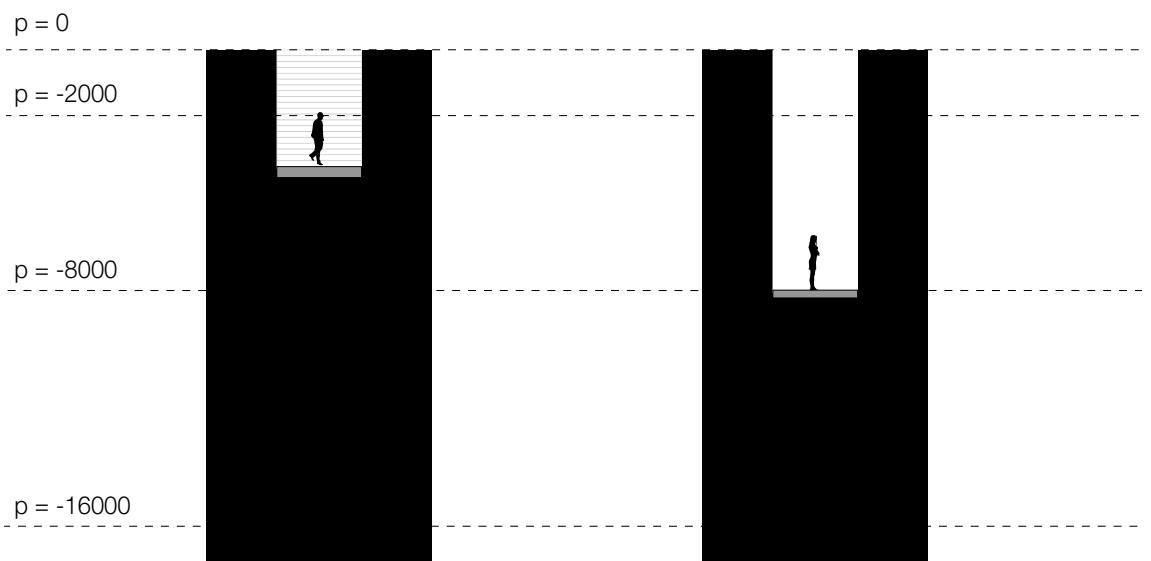
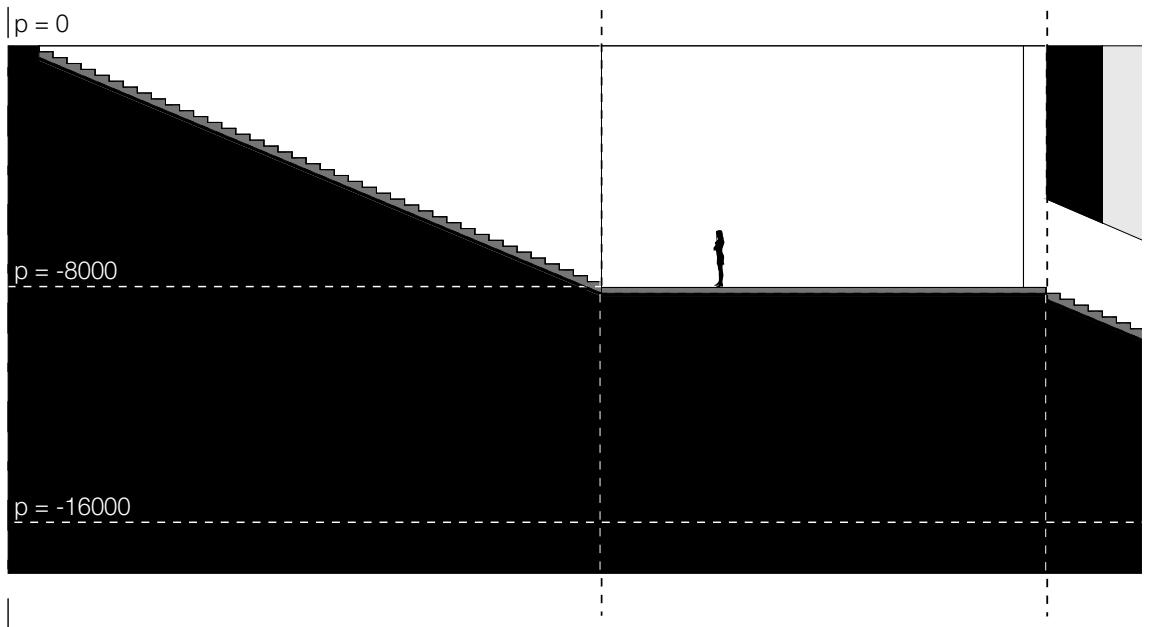
This concrete is made with the limestone debris that is won while tunneling the route. It has a light colour

The gravel is made from limestone debris. under the gravel there is a water buffer with a n overflow system that alarms visitors to evacuate the chapel when there is to much water

The sand will be the same kind you would find at Aruba's finest beaches







Acceptance

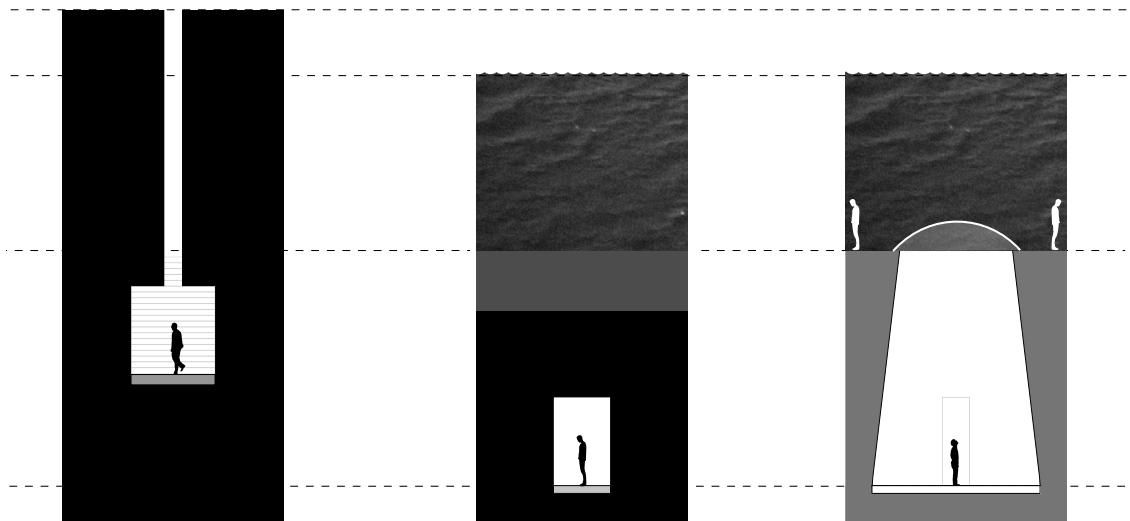
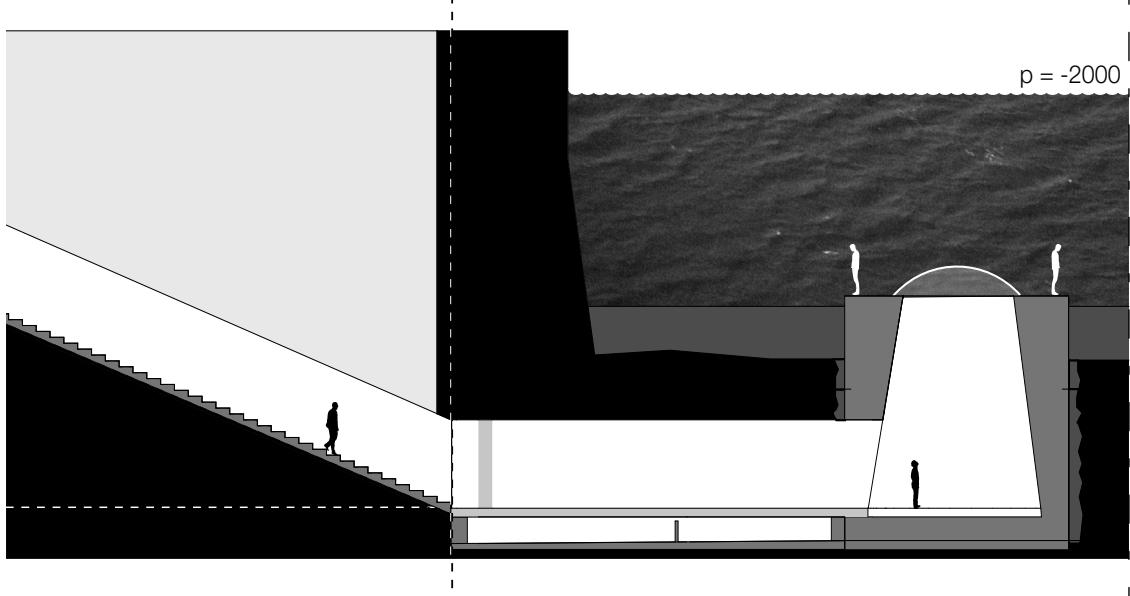
You have climbed out of a deep pit of emotions, and are a step closer to accepting what has happened, when you exit, you can look back at the ocean and sunset.
Then it's time to leave.

5

Depression

Just when you think it is over and you're in the light, you're still in a deep state of depression. The space is deep, you can look up but have no idea about your surroundings.

4



Bargaining

What if I was there?
would it have been
different? You will think of
all the other options while
climbing back up the
steps to the light.

3

Anger

After the denial, anger follows. The path is narrow and dark, and you can see light at both ends of the tunnel. One side is reality, the other a memory.

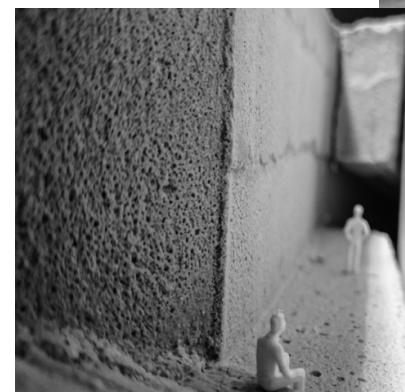
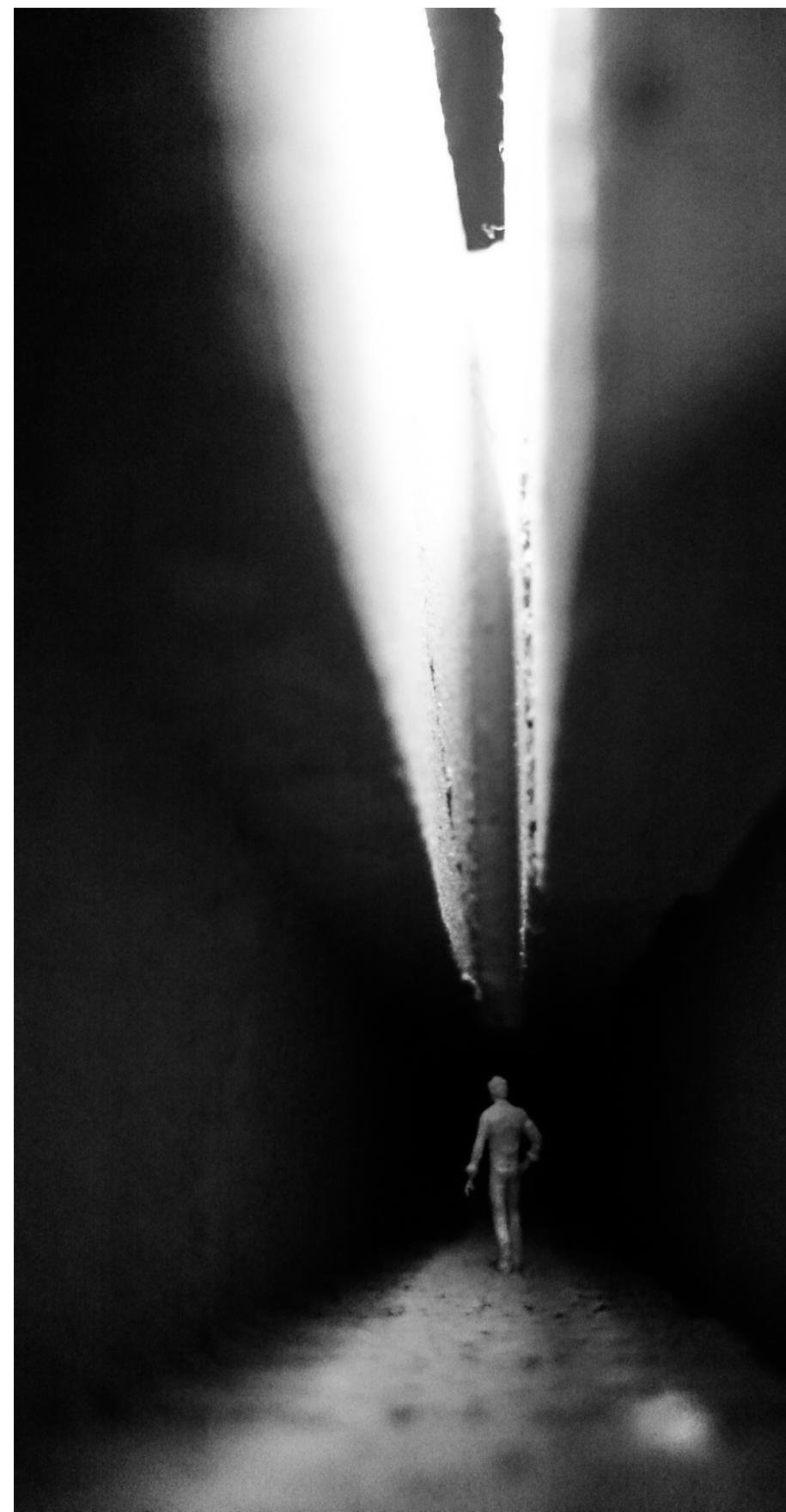
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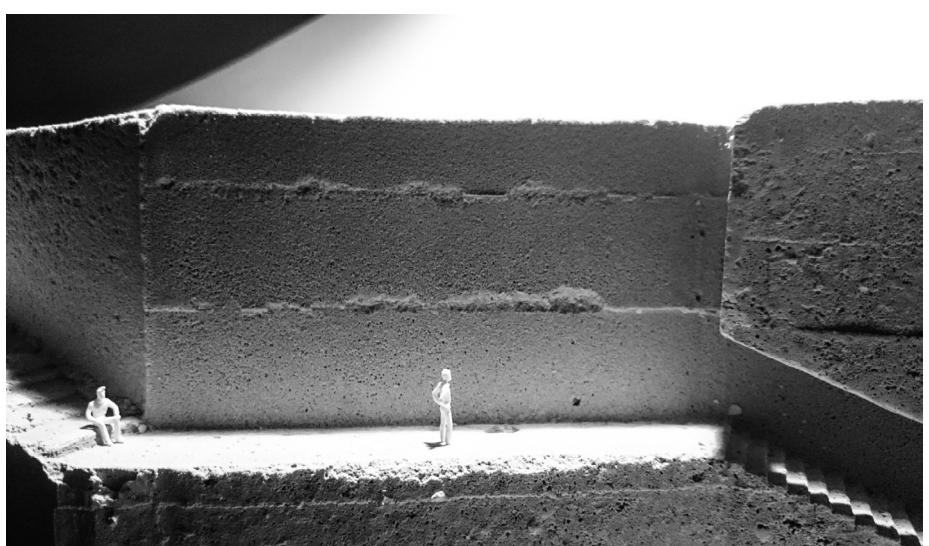
Denial

The journey hasn't been clear from the start of the path to the chapel. When time has come to go back the reality kicks in. It's time to start your journey to acceptance

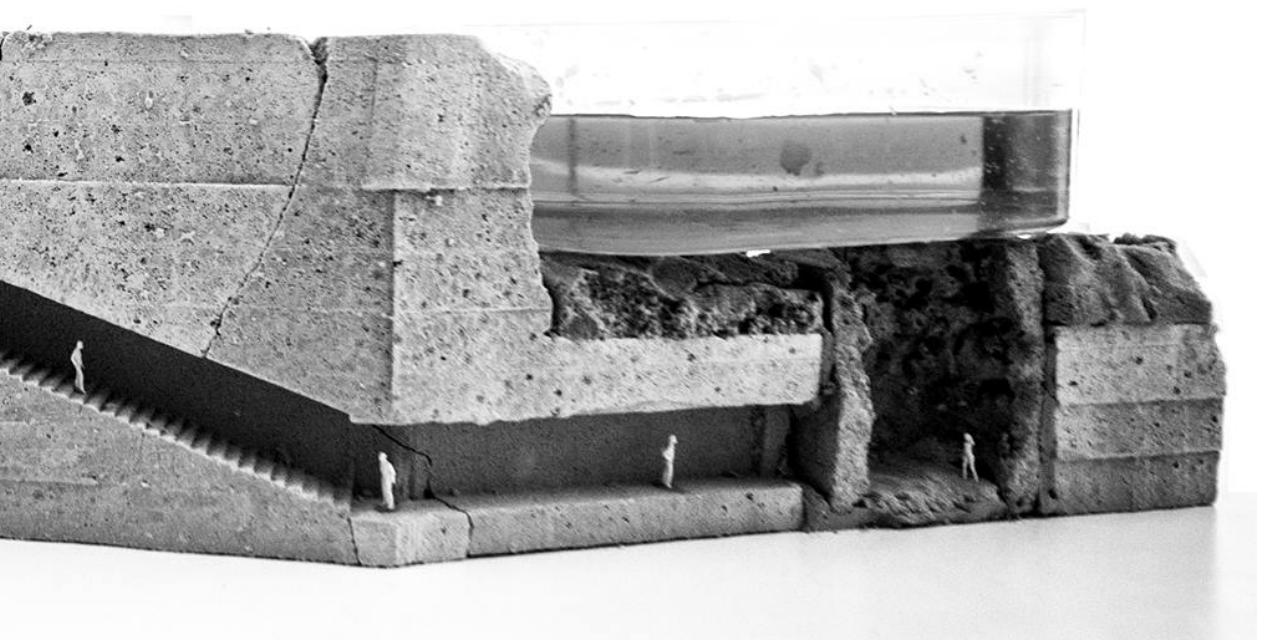
1

9













"I just want my time and my mind intact"
-Earl Sweatshirt

DWA RS





SOUND



FREEDOM



QUEER

DWARS

"Dwars" is a performance that highlights the frustrations we feel as queer Arubans and how difficult it is to navigate those two identities. As it feels like one wants to exclude the other. But in reality, Aruban/Caribbean queers have always existed and deserve to be seen and celebrated. Shari and Eva presented this piece with a lot of nerves but at the end it was truly a special moment to be able to present this to its very first public audience: the audience at Caribbean Ancestry Club. Thank you again so much to Alfi and Daudi and team for a great evening! A special thanks to Darwin Winklaar for designing our clothes... you are incredible!!!!

In the context of decolonial practices, this piece hits a few important notes for us. Starting with the heavy homophobia we face in our own communities created by the age old tale of colonizers forcing their religion and beliefs onto us. The song we used in this performance is 'Abo So' by Padu del Caribe. The Aruban waltz at times, and with this song in particular, is a dance of courtship. In practicing and performing this song we wanted to carry our traditions forward in a more inclusive way. In a way which didn't make us choose between one or the other. Reclaiming what has been denied from us, as queer Arubans. At the same time, it is also coming back to our roots. Practicing traditions that belong to our people. The Aruban culture is as much ours as it is anyone else's. This is our version of a decolonial practice.

Picture taken and edited by: R V D I N A
[@rvdina](#)

Attire: Darwin Winklaar
[@darwinklaar](#)

Filmed by: WORM Rotterdam
[@worm.piratebay](#)





BODY



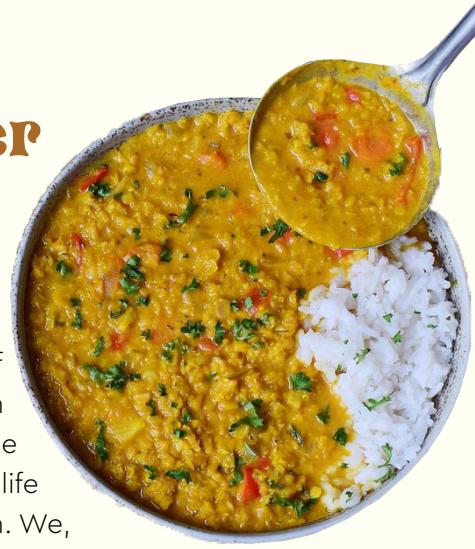
FREEDOM



HOME

Eating the border

By Taariq Ali Sheik



I will start with a disclaimer which I rarely offer. I am not who you think I am. You see, the juxtaposition of my body and the lines from which my body originate poses an interesting terroir to the logics and institutions that commodify diversity, and the lines that define my terrains fracture me, carve my body into easily consumed hunks. So, telling you who-where I am is an act of trust. An offer to harvest with an expectation of tilling and nourishment. The extension of a hand, in welcome, in greeting, in both an offer and request for assistance.

I come from Chatsworth, an Indian township of semi-detached houses terracing the sandstone hills inland from Durban, on the east coast of South Africa, fringing the Indian ocean. Chatsworth is the product of apartheid planning, abutted by the steep Mlazi and Umhlatuzana river valleys to the south and north. Effective dividers, under the logic of racial separation, from Umlazi, a black township to the south, and the affluent white neighbourhoods to the north. This¹ is the geography I come from, of rivers not as paths but as walls. The rivers of course, oppose this division, delivering rich sediments to the warm

embrace of the Indian Ocean, a fertile nursery for life at the horizon. We, the divided peoples, meet at the coast, at the crashing waves and shifting sands that defy fencing. In Chatsworth you will find the fried fruits of the sea, Zulu hens, madumbe and boiled peanuts, bhajja and samosas, a particular masala. I am a South Africa descendent of Indian indentures labourers, a heady mix, a contested space, and a deflection from power. I have been told I am here (wherever) to steal jobs and benefits, a brown body placed as a barrier between exploitation and privilege. In the west I am a paradox. A reminder of the failure of empire, a threat, and a postcolonial commodity, exotic, interesting. I am much more besides.

What does it mean to do decolonization when we come from across all these fragmentations?

What does it mean to be a child of colonial temporality, a being existing out of the histories and nomenclatures of coloniality²?

1 A note on citations. Footnotes can be scary, but are also liminal spaces. Literally in the margins, a bridge between sources and thinkers and readers that produce the marginated text as a collective work and a collective relation.

2 Coloniality/modernity describes the logic of colonialism-imperialism and capitalism-neoliberalism. See for instance Mignolo, Walter D. 2007, 'DELINKING', *Cultural Studies*, 21.2, pp 449–514.

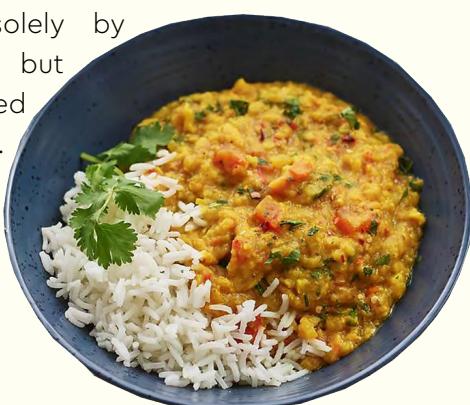
What does it mean to be a child of Africa and of India, forged from rolling waves and scything cane? I have transplanted myself to the Netherlands, the colonial heartland, the beating heart of this beast fed by the flesh of nations. How do we starve this animal from whose blood we feed? What does it mean to be invested in decolonization, and decolonization of these 6 islands in colonial relation to the Netherlands, to which I have never been and to which I can stake no claim? Indeed, how do we, the colonial diasporas, do decolonization without firm and attached claims to land, when we are the sand sweeping the shores, always present but frequently in motion, always on the precipice of being swept away³. How do I, how do we do decolonization without sweeping my/our sands over these lands, making a desert, an empty vessel upon which I project my hopes and expectations and my fears and anxieties.

**How do we do decolonization?
I do decolonization over a plate
of dal and rice with a spoonful of
Maru chutney. Hands only please!**

Let me tell you first of the sensation of Maru chutney, an achar produced by the family of a close friend in Aruba.

3 I'm thinking here, and also where I mention a meeting at the coast, along with Kamau Brathwaite's 'tidalectics,' of 'the early morning old woman of Caribbean history,' 'sweeping the sand of her yard away' (ConVERSations with Nathaniel Mackey, 1999, 30), and with Tiffany Lethabo King's 'Black Shoals,' (2019) of offshore sandbars as the meeting place of diaspora and indigeneity.

Bitter, sour, and spice introduced to the tastebuds by a slick coat of oil. A taste, a smell, a sense, of home. A bodily experience that transported me across time and space. Across the Atlantic to Aruba? No. To a younger version of myself in Chatsworth. No distinct memory, not a particular dish or a specific time and place, just a feeling. Of comfort, of warmth, of home. How is this possible? That home is also a place to which I have never been? I was familiar with the tracts and wakes of indentured labour, of sweet cane, bitter tea, and soft cotton. With the constant refrains and captured imaginations whenever the Caribbean would be on TV in South Africa, 'how does there look like here?' The diaspora, I came to realise, is much like dal and rice. Split and skinned lentils, of multiple varieties, boiled until creamy, tempered with hot oil and warm spices, ladled onto steamed grains of rice, soft but distinct, and mulched by hands to an amalgam of scent, texture, and taste. Our ancestors sweated in the hulls of ships on the frothing sea, hard labour and proximity cracking their divisions, forging new textures tempered under a familiar sun and foreign soils. This we share in common, a memory not determined solely by geography, but by shared experience. An experience that crosses the timelines





and geographies of colonial em/dis-placement.

Geographical identification is a tool, a master's tool perhaps ⁴, but a useful tool in breaking the shackles of empire. But once a tool has been used for dismantling and construction it needs to be put down or it risks becoming a weapon. Lines on maps have become weapons of division, defining and restricting access to humanity ⁵. The path to our emancipation from the timelines and the nomenclatures of coloniality does not track the border, it traverses it, trampling the barbed wire and concrete blocks of isolation to find the intimate connections that make home both a place and an experience, the scent and the taste and the comfort that can be found (apparently, and I'm still astounded by this) both in Chatsworth and in Aruba.

When we find solidarity and coalition, when we find love and home across the border, we build new timelines and new geographies.

Timelines and geographies of connection rather than division,

stitching the colonial wounds marked by lines on maps and boxes on forms. When we cross the border, we crack the structure and threaten the shape of colonial modernity, breaking the fragile logic of division. So, I once again offer you my hand, now slightly stained from turmeric. Join me as we feast the ruin of empire.

⁴ Lorde, Audre. 1984, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. pp 110- 114.

⁵ As the border dehumanizes those who cannot fulfill the criteria of belonging to the interior.

Mission Statement

6 ISLANDS zine is an initiative born out of the need to talk about the position of the 6 islands — Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, St. Eustatius and St. Maarten — within the so-called “Kingdom of the Netherlands”. From an intersectional approach we explore the experiences of Afro descendants and Indigenous Peoples currently part of the ABCSSS Community. We uncover the impacts of the colonial legacy on the everyday to collectively re-imagine and construct a decolonial future together.

We aim to build community and a movement around the 6 ISLANDS — with a yearly zine as a means of archiving collective and individual ways of decolonization. Throughout the year we organize workshops, book-club events, movie screenings, talks and more! 6 ISLANDS is co-convened by Ichmarah, Alexine, and Danick.

Caribbean people, Let's speak up! 

Glossary

As this issue of 6 ISLANDS zine comprises 24 contributions spread over almost a hundred pages, we decided to develop this glossary to make sure all this amazing work is accessible to you, regardless of whether it is featured at the start, middle, or end of the zine. The glossary offers an overview of the themes you might encounter while reading and can be used as a reading guide. You can recognize contributions about a specific topic by the icons. We hope this makes it easier for you to locate the contributions that speak to your specific interests.



Ancestors

Decolonization involves an active reclaiming of our ancestral histories, which the colonial project sought to erase. These contributions explore what that might look like.

8–9
10–11
12–17

Lecyca
Ralph
glenpherd

22–24
26
64

Kris
Maanarak
Ralph



Body

These contributions explore new, decolonial relationships with our bodies, which were racialized, subject to trauma, and deemed less worthy through colonization.

22–24
26
38–39

Kris
Maanarak
Nicole

49–51
82–84

Tittel
Taariq



Community writing

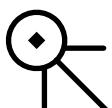
These pieces come forth from those that attended the Community Writing as Decolonial Practice Workshop in November 2021.

27–32
33–34
35–36
37

Danick
Writing workshop
Laura
Rufino

38–39
40–42
44

Nicole
Janae
Alex



Education & Knowledge

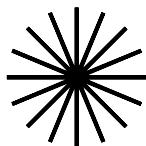
The colonial project destroyed various ways of knowing the world, forcefully replacing these through Eurocentric education. What might decolonial knowledge and education look like?

12–17
18–21

glenpherd
Joshuar

27–32
52–55

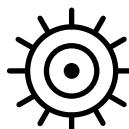
Danick
Andrea



Freedom

What is decolonization but not freedom? These contributions speak to the many ways we fight for, and experience, freedom.

10-11	Ralph	38-39	Nicole
12-17	glenpherd	43	Ichmarah
22-24	Kris	44	Alex
25	Ichmarah	64	Ralph
27-32	Danick	80-81	Shari & Eva
35	Laura	82-84	Taariq



Indigeneity

Before colonization, Indigeneity was the norm. These submissions explore decolonization from an Indigenous perspective.

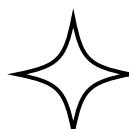
18-21	Joshuar	45-48	Justin
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Mental Health

These contributions explore the intricate connections between colonialism, decoloniality, and mental health.

36-37	Rufino	49-51	Tittel
40-42	Janae	65-79	Antoine



Place, home & borders

In these contributions, our relationships to the places we call home and the borders that confine us is explored and reclaimed.

8-9	Lecyca	56-59	Edrieënna
18-21	Joshuar	60-63	Gyonne
25	Ichmarah	65-79	Antoine
35	Laura	82-84	Taariq
52-55	Andrea		



Queer

These contributions explore the queering of identity, which the colonial project sought to erase and suppress.

25	Ichamarah	49-51	Tittel
36-37	Rufino	80-81	Shari & Eva



Sound & Movement

Colonization has sought to confine the sounds we make as we move through the world. Which movements and sounds does decolonization allow us to un- and recover?

10-11	Ralph	56-59	Edrieënna
43	Ichmarah	60-63	Gyonne
44	Alex	80-81	Shari & Eva

6 ISLANDS zine

Decolonial Reading Lists

Danick's Decolonial Reading List

Welcome to my reading list! Above all, it is a reflection of the musings, thoughts, concepts and ideas that have occupied my mind over the last few months, as I have navigated this crazy world during these crazy times. It reflects my day-to-day job at an academic institution, the value I ascribe to reading Caribbean in community, that I read the Funambulist while taking a bath, and that I welcome decolonial distractions into my inbox. I invite you to share in my reading list. If it resonates with you, or if you wanted to add anything, I would love it if you reached out. Stay decolonial! [@yo_danick](https://www.instagram.com/yo_danick)



Ichmarah's Read, Watch, Listen List

Decoloniality is such a broad term and I feel like it's often only associated with fighting the oppressor, fighting for our existence. I learned through our community that a part of practicing decoloniality is to also embrace joy. I want to share with you the books, podcasts and vlogs that have brought – and still bring – me joy and feel seen, and that I got to learn from at the same time.

[@clitoria_erekta & @ichmarah](#)



Alex's [@stingslikealex] Read & Watch List

For the past few months I've done a deep dive into the topic of tambú, specifically by looking at the dance of tambú as a practice of embodied pleasure. Mas decolonial ku eseí no por. Here's what I've been reading and watching to help shape my scattered train of thoughts, deep into my nights.

[@stingslikealex](#)



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www.6islandszine.com

Read other issues online (FREE):
Issue 1: Language
Issue 2: Re-Imagining Sex(uality)

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